Oxford Poetry

1914–1916

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OXFORD POETRY

1914—1916

New York Agents:
LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
Fourth Avenue and 30th Street

OXFORD POETRY

1914-1916

OXFORD
B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET
1917

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE sustained interest in the volumes of "Oxford Poetry" published in 1914, 1915, and 1916 suggests that their reprint in one volume uniform with "Oxford Poetry, 1910-1913," may prove remunerative.

Thanks are due to the Editors of *Poetry and Drama*, *The Oxford Magazine*, *The Isis*, *The Stapeldon Magazine*, and *The Westminster Gazette* for permission to reprint some of these poems.

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OXFORD POETRY

1914

EDITED BY

G. D. H. C. AND W. S. V.

PREFACE

HERE is another book of Oxford poetry, the harvest of the year 1914, and I am invited to do what I can to give the poets that which poets so often need, an introduction to readers. You therefore that are readers, I charge you, read this book. You are free to praise or censure, so you will only read. Your love and your hate are welcome; what we cannot away with is that air of superiority and indifference which, in our opinion, sits so ill on you. Many of you read the newspapers; have you no ears for news except such news as is dead and rotten the morning after its birth? What we offer you is as fresh as the latest tidings concerning Kings and Cabinets, with this difference in our favour, that our news is new yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow; it will keep its sweetness when your far-fetched and dear-bought importations have gone to dust. Can you taste nothing but what trembles on the verge of decay? Will you listen to no speaker unless he screams and dies? It is characteristic of your odious self-sufficiency that you do not answer questions like these. I am in no mind to keep on asking you, "Are you there?" Perhaps you are not even reading this preface. I will be troubled with you no longer; you may stay away as long as you please; you may borrow the late Mr. Herbert Spencer's ear-stoppers to protect you from all that does not jump

with your so-called thought; no one will quarrel with you; you shall enjoy your deafness; and our poets, a goodly company, will sing to one another.

This book, the work of many hands, is named, like a vintage wine, from the place and year of its birth. The place is a good place for poetry; as for the year, it promises well, but it cannot be judged until time shall show whether the vintage of 1914 matures pleasantly with keeping. Oxford poetry must needs be dated, for the poets who produce it are here but a short time. There is a new generation every year, and in three years it has vanished away. The place is like that bridge in the sister University which was defined by a legal disciplinarian as "a place of transit, not a place of lounge." Yet, as the phrase testifies, some wayfarers do lounge there—not unprofitably. Or, to take a figure from nearer home, it is like a railway-station, amply furnished with waiting-rooms, where holiday-makers disport themselves, and restless travellers chafe at the interruption of their journey. The University of Oxford is a cluster of towers and quadrangles grouped by the side of a line of railway which runs north and south. The railway empties it (save for the officials) and fills it up again three times a year. Both the railway and the impatient travellers are fitly celebrated in these poems.

Those who search this book for the callow fancies and extravagances which are supposed to belong to youth may find a trace of them here and there, but in the main they will be disappointed. Poetry is poetry, whether he who writes it be young or old. Not a few great poets have died young. A very short tale of years is enough to

supply all the essential experience, and the wise heart is a marvellous quick learner. It may be true, as Dryden remarks, that the practice of long years is necessary to teach the idiom and the music of our native speech. But practice may very easily pass into trick and rote; or it may beget the vanities of technical skill. Anyhow, these poets for the most part talk simply enough of what they know; they do not blow iridescent bubbles to teach the world how to shape itself. Love, and the life of man under the open sky, are perhaps the chief themes of poetry, as they are the chief preservatives of human sanity: this book is full of them. If desire and fancy are more in evidence than passion and experience, that is natural not only to youth, but to poetry. Those who submit without demur to the laws of life write no poetry. The world was made spherical (so the theologians tell us), and the heart triangular, to show that the one can never be perfectly fitted to the other. God's most candid critics are those of his children whom he has made poets.

> "Bid me to live, and I will live
> Thy Protestant to be."

Not that the Oxford poets are out of love with life—far otherwise; but they are taking stock of their opportunities, estimating their adversaries, and concentrating their powers, like runners who are kept waiting in tense attitudes at the mark until the flag shall fall and the struggle begin. They will not be together again till the race is over; meantime they are friends. They are hungry, some of them, for pleasure, and they will be given experience, which is pleasure without the sickly taste.

The most surprising quality of poetry may be discerned everywhere in this book—its absolute truthfulness. Rodomontade and pretence may cut a decent enough figure in a speech or an essay, but when they touch poetry it dies. These short poems portray their writers as truly as a photograph, and far more significantly. The sun is a faithful artist, but his choice of emphasis is often too ironical to be intelligible to human faculty; it is adapted to a wider scheme of things, beyond our comprehension. Here are portraits drawn with a human pencil, and recording nothing that is outside the range of human sympathy. You readers who will not listen to me might find here, if you had the sense to look for it, a greater wealth of character-drawing than is in all your law-reports and witty novels. These writers are not deceiving you in their own defence, nor are they posturing to excite your admiration. They are saying what they think and feel; if you listen, you will know more about them than ever they told to their parents or their tutors. As you do not love poetry, perhaps you are cynically inclined. Well, here is a treat for you. Think of the fond mother who asserts, in the pride of her maternity, that she can divine every thought that passes through her boy's or girl's head. Think of the conscientious tutor who believes, good man, that he knows his pupils, and even (going further than reverence can follow him) that he has himself shaped and furnished their minds. Think of these two, and then imagine them reading this book. Fortunately, they are not likely to trouble their heads about it; they will pronounce it very nice and will advise the writers to get back to their work. They are right;

the world is so constructed that poets can live in it only on sufferance; they must find some other way of pleasing those who do not care for their poetry. It is a good discipline for them, and they have their compensation; on high days and holidays they revisit their kingdom, and, from the security of an inviolable judgment-seat, pass sentence on the world.

WALTER RALEIGH.

OXFORD,
July, 1914.

TRANSLATED FROM THEODORE DE BANVILLE

YOUTH untouched by gravity,
Bright as sun in Italy,
Guard thy golden levity.

This is wisdom! To love wine,
Beauty too, and spring divine;
Let others go. Let these be thine.

Nod to fate among thy foes,
And when thou greetest the primrose
Quaff her beauty ere she goes.

To the corpse locked in the grave
What is left? Why nothing, save
The love some months of spring-time gave.

"Each event a cause supposes,"
Sullen age research imposes.
Words! words! Come and gather roses.

SONG AFTER LUNCH

THE gods have given this Tuscan wine
That I might call to mind
What heady young delights were mine
When Cynthia was kind.

A second flask, unopened yet,
Invites me to be bold
And, drinking deeper, to forget
My Cynthia is cold.

DOUGLAS COLE
(MAGDALEN AND BALLIOL)

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH

O LORD of light and laughter and desire,
Young lover, who wouldst make the world thine own,
Who leavest every spirit a trail of fire,
Seeking from heart to heart the high unknown,
Full soon the seed thy loving ways have sown
Shall branch to grandeur and o'ershadow thee,
When thou art bondsman, having made so free,
And jest and laughter to the winds are thrown.
When thou must follow after, who wast sought ;
When thou must buy, who once wast dearly bought.

Seek through the world thy Jack o' Lantern joy :
The hidden truth thou soon shall understand.
Go on thy way secure, thou radiant boy ;
A little longer dwell in fairyland.
Base sorrow shall not scar thee with its brand :
For thee, and for all spirits like to thine,
To lead you onward to the life divine,
This crooked path of pleasure has been planned.
Children of life, whose hearts are high and single,
Ye shall know love, where joy and sorrow mingle.

Thy jest turns earnest soon : now, joyous lad,
Bound on the heart's high venture thou dost go
In chase of wonder, not to make thee glad,
But for the very gladness thou dost know.
Soon from thy quest of rapture shall outgrow
Love, that shall set thy thoughts upon a star.

Thy passions, that so wild and wayward are,
Away their wanton waywardness shall throw.
By one desire two spirits shall be bound :
Found, thou shalt find ; and, finding, shalt be found.

Thou'rt fain this day for joys that quickly end :
Thou livest for small profits, quick returns.
In every place thou findest out a friend ;
For every lovely thing thy spirit burns.
Too long pursued, that quest to surfeit turns ;
Weary of childish joys the heart grows dull,
Thy spirit that of life and youth is full
Out of these little loves true loving learns.
In one great longing thou shalt find the truth,
Passing from boyhood on to manhood's youth.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

AS the sun to things seen
Is thy presence to me.
Being weak, I am strong ;
Being bond, I am free.
Nothing sordid or mean
To our love can belong.

Wise in our day,
We have chosen our way.
We have chained our desire
To a star.
We burn, and our bodies are fire,
As souls are.

In thine eyes is a look that is deeper
Than looks save of lovers can be.
Can I harvest thy splendour, O reaper?
Can I garner thy soul that is free
As the sea, the destroyer, the keeper,
The secret, the all-knowing sea ?

I will strive ; for thine arms are around me.
I will strive ; for thy kisses are strong.
To thy conquering car thou hast bound me :
My spoils to thy triumph belong.
At the end of the day thou hast crowned me :
Thou hast shown me the right and the wrong.

Whatsoever we choose
Shall be great by our love.
We will venture nor fear :
Every way let us prove.
We can nothing refuse
That may bring us more near.

Take : this is my flesh.
I am fast in thy mesh.
One body, one soul,
We are greatest and least.
We are even as the whole—
God is found in the beast.

TO THE MIDDLE CLASS

FRIENDS, when ye tire of seeking after gold,
And finding nothing save the bitter quest,
When ye your sordid failure have confessed,
And vain ambition in your hearts is cold,
Oh, then at last your spirits shall grow bold,
Though by yourselves ye have been sore opprest
With courage and high faith to love the best
That for a mess of pottage ye have sold.

When ye have learned to know the tyrant few
Who on your strength grow fat, while ye are lean,
When with more seeing eyes the world ye view,
And know your wasted lives for poor and mean,
Then shall ye dare to make all things anew,
Building the future of the might have been.

ODIUM ANTITHEOLOGICUM

I.

"THE POOR YE HAVE WITH YOU ALWAYS. . . ."

THIS is the strong man's chain of steel :
This is the rich man's proud device.
This is the throne whereat we kneel,
The altar of our sacrifice.

II.

TO A PREACHER.

A SEAT in Heaven, at auction, found no buyer.
Are men such fools, or you, sir, such a liar ?

III.

TO AN UP-TO-DATE THEOLOGIAN.

YOU doubt, Sir Parson, if the Will Divine
In Cana turned the water into wine.
Be not perplexed : here lies the proof you sought.
Your wits no less a miracle have wrought.
Of three parts doubtful, certain of a quarter,
You turn the Gospel wine to muddy water.

IV.

POSER FOR BISHOPS.

YOU say the will is free.
How comes it then that man
In deed's a Puritan,
In thought a debauchee ?

V.

THE DEVIL.

WHO the Devil made the Devil ?
Devil only knows !
But clearly he who made the Devil
To the Devil goes.

VERSES FOR SOME COLOURED DRAWINGS

OUT in the long grass
I watched the sunny hours pass,
And you, my young bride,
Came creeping at my side.

Over your shoulders bare
Flowing your coal-black hair,
Closer you came to me
Whispering my name to me.

Closer and closer press'd
Strained your quick falling breast,
Strained your red lips to mine
Sipped from me love's good wine.

I gave you all my passion red,
And great wet tears shed,
Washing all your white skin
Clean from its soil of sin.

All the long summer's day
You had your woman's way,
Then you crept away,
Leaving the world all grey.

What shall I do alone
Now that my love has flown,
Here in the long grass
While the sunny hours pass. . . .

TO MARY

MARY walking in the London streets,
You took me once for gold,
And in your little bed I wept
At the tale you told.

Mary walking in the London streets,
With little seeking eyes,
I've grown into a man since then—
And all your tale was lies.

Mary walking in the London streets,
Selling love to men,
If you take me to your little bed
Pray God I'll weep again.

REASONABLENESS

I THOUGHT that we had quarrelled, so I went
Out of your room into the drizzling night.
You had been reasonable, said what you meant;
I asked too much, and you—well, you were right.
I passed your window, and I could just see
A shaded lamp beside your open book,
And you already reading quietly.
I paused a moment, thinking you would look.
You never moved, but started some old song,
Your feet up on the chair where I had sat.
I thought that we had quarrelled. I was wrong:
You did not even care enough for that.

T. W. EARP
(*EXETER*)

ANTHONY HEYWOOD

WHEN Queen Elizabeth ruled the land,
Stiff and grim in her pearl-sewn robe,
And Hawkins and Drake their pillaging planned,
And "Lear" was mouthed at the Thames-side Globe—
When England was cock of the walk, in brief—
Lived Anthony Heywood, rogue and thief.

Some courier, splashing the Kentish mire,
With hearty regrets for "our cousin of Spain,"
At towns that somehow got set on fire
And treasure astray on the Spanish Main,
Might glance up a lane as he galloping went,
And catch the glimpse of a tinker's tent.

Our hero-knave was at play outside,
A real slip of the gipsy-breed,
Brown as a berry and dusky-eyed,
With the glint of a wolf as he gazed in greed
At the steaming pot a-swing on its chain,
Heavy with spoil of the stealthily slain.

But Anthony, though the tinker's son,
Grew tired of the chink—chink—chink from dawn
Till the chinking tinkering day was done,
So he left his father's tent forlorn,
And fled, for the heart of a gipsy child
Beats quick to the alluring wild.

You can hardly picture England then,
When you'd meet romance in the visible shape
Of a vagabond troop in a woodland glen,
Whose "Stand and deliver!" would hold you agape,
While you'd rue a purse or a gem misplaced;
Herein lay work to young Anthony's taste.

For years he lived by the luck of the road,
A difficult school and hard to learn,
Till at last his nimble-wittedness showed
That here was one with a graceful turn
To lighten the weight of the heavily-fobbed,
Or spy out a flock that might well be robbed.

There was that within him—the fire—the spark—
That proclaims a man great, whether thief or prince,
That none may define, but all may mark,
The knack, or the strength, to rule and convince;
It's what you can stifle, but never can kill—
Stubbornness—genius—what you will!

So when news came to Anthony's gang
That the king of the gipsies of England was dead—
On a gibbet, alas! he happened to hang—
They cried that Heywood should rule instead,
As being a comrade trusty and tried,
And off to the meeting-place they hied.

And when to the place prescribed they'd come—
The march, I imagine, was made by night—
They found that our country's ruffiandom
Was gathered there in the moon's full light;
Old rogues, young rogues, rogues false and true,
They were all in that tatterdemalion crew.

There was red-haired Rufe, there was Nick-the-Purse,
The city popinjay Whitehall Jack,
The grisly northerner Fire-the-Furze,
And one-eyed James, called Barrel-of-Sack,

There was even the famous Cutting-Ball ;
But Anthony Heywood topped them all.

They chose him king, and he solemnly swore,
In the orthodox cant by tradition conveyed,
To rule, to the best of his gipsy lore,
On matters of booty, rescue and raid.
The rest as solemnly swore to obey,
And the conference ended ere break of day.

He dwelt in honour among his thieves,
Rich in plunder and happy in fame,
Taking, as wind takes autumn leaves,
Love that went as it lightly came,
With a careless kiss for the tangled curls
And lustrous eyes of his gipsy girls.

But Fortune throwing her changeful dice,
Now with a smile, now with a frown,
Gave him a throne, and then, in a trice,
Tired of the humour and toppled him down ;
Or did sister goddesses freeze her coy
With their tittering mirth at her "vagabond boy" ?

For the splendour of London called to him,
With its theatres, its women, its locks to be picked,
So to London he followed his fatal whim,
By desire for new fields of adventure pricked,
And soon, his biography sadly reveals,
The Watch had His Majesty safe by the heels.

Yet the book ends not with a call to tears,
For although he was sentenced to tread the air,
He tricked our dame with the fatal shears
By a promise at once overseas to repair,
Where the good tobacco grew tall and green
In the virgin land of the virgin queen.

Did he die a slave? I would rather think
That the old unrest reclaimed its own
In a sudden dash to the jungle brink
And a reckless plunge into wilds unknown;
That death found him sitting with peaceful face,
The god of some gilded Indian race.

He fell a king; rose, a god, perhaps;
And armchair-deep you judge him thus,
"Things differ so, after time's long lapse,
And proper restraints, of course, bind us;
Besides, his end may have come in strife,
And yet"—with a sigh—"well, he lived his life!"

LONDON ANNIE IN THE HOPFIELDS

WHEN passing summer flecked the leaves
With golden stains and tongues of flame,
And harvesters bound up the sheaves,
Haggard and pale and worn she came.

But now, where their green tendrils twine
In fairy arches down the glade,
She picks the hops, and her eyes shine
Like those of a bacchante strayed.

OXFORD FROM BOAR'S HILL

I HAD walked far along the Berkshire lanes,
When the bare fields were furrowed by the plough,
And that rich pomp wherein the summer wanes
Fluttered in rags from every sapless bough.

Across my pathway stealthy darkness crept,
The crimson sunset glories lost their flame,
The countryside in quiet nightfall slept,
When to a hilltop suddenly I came.

I saw dim houses clustering down the road,
Trains rushed like fiery dragons through the night,
And far beyond, in middle distance glowed
The city of learning with its crown of light.

WHEN YOU ARE DEAD

YOU shall not be of those sad folk
That harsh winds drive from pole to pole,
Cold and bare as the wandering smoke;
For when you are dead, I will make you a cloak
Of my love and my dreams to cover your soul.

LVGETE VENERES

NOW that my little dog is dead
The endless winds blow over his head,
And he is very far, alone,
From the men and towns that were his own.

In Berkshire woods he should have lain,
In pine-woods whispering with the rain,
Or by his dear pool, clear and deep,
In Berkshire slept his endless sleep.

So might I stand, and think again
Of our long rambles in the rain,
Or call for him to come to me
Across the woods by Eversley.

Now that my little dog is dead
There are three poplars at his head,
And he is lying very still
Under a meadow on a hill.

I can see him lying—three foot deep—
He is sleeping now as he used to sleep.
He is lying now as he used to lie,
With his four paws stretched so patiently.

Waiting for some clear, summer dawning,
And for my whistle in the morning.
But the man he loved is far away,
And his night ends not in any day.

The endless winds above him sing,
And pattering rain at evening ;
He is dwindling to a skeleton,
My dainty one, my lovely one.

Sleep well, Mick, by your poplar-trees,
Sleep on, fear nothing, be at ease ;
Somewhere, somehow we'll meet again,
And go long rambles in the rain.

ARISTOTLE AND YOU

THE house, the room were silent through and through,
As on my lamp-lit page I read "*φιλίας*
ἴσως τύχοι . . ." and stopped, remembering you.
I had thought often of those November days,
Drawn back my thoughts to me, and turned once more
To "*σπάνια γὰρ ταῦτα· καὶ τόδ' αὖ*"
Often; but this time I could not forget.
God! for one day again, and once more yet
You, lithely moving, my companion,
"*τούτῳ μάλιστα δὴ προσθετέον*"
The lighted page spoke at me. I shook my head.
"No, in God's name I've had enough," I said.
"*τούτῳ μάλιστα*", I can see you still.
τούτῳ μάλιστα shakes my tottering will.
τούτῳ μάλιστα—well, tho' this is dust,
And you are, you are. . . .
I suppose I must.

FOR A BIRTHDAY

A LITTLE song made out of lavender,
A little tune of delicate, white rain,
A silver lamp alight ; these are my gifts ;
These, and my love again.

SPACE

THERE is a lamp within doors
Whereby his mother reads
Silently, never stirring,
Some book of ancient deeds.

Upstairs may be one candle,
By whose cool, glimmering light
He leans and sees enraptured
The blue, bat-haunted night.

His shadow is on the garden
As he leans out to hear
Its light sounds, and more distant,
By many miles less near,

How past the starlit hillsides
And the long woods below,
Rumblingly down the railways
Far trains creep to and fro.

THE NEW PROPHET

WHY should I write until the west grows dim
Soft verses running silkily like this?
I will be harsh and quick, remembering him
Who cried his warnings in the wilderness.

Hope is not caught upon a silver chord,
Nor love imprisoned in a rose's scent,
And shall I be the herald of the Lord
In low, monotonous threnodies of Lent?

The old days are ending. May their ending be
Some dreamlike vespers heavy with regret,
And I will shake them from me, and hold in fee
The stranger lands whereto my feet are set,

THE WINE OF SPRING

WHEN I woke to-day I saw
The whole sky one haze of blue.
Sunlight streamed across the floor ;
Sunlight filled the gardens too.
And the pigeons sailing by,
Murmuring in their happy way
With half a song and half a sigh,
Seemed as if to say :
"There is that something in the air
Which men call the Spring.
And something in thy young love's eyes
Which brooks no tarrying."

JUNE EVENING

NOW the daylight droops and dies,
But the twilight lingers long ;
And the red glow in the skies,
Like the last notes of a song,
Falls upon the crimson clover,
Where the white moth flies.

By the dark shore of the streams
Guelders lift their veilèd light,
And the sceptred iris gleams ;
While the dog-rose, softly bright,
Folds unto herself an image
Of the sunset's dreams.

Sprinkled o'er the yellowing field
Now the white moon-daisies glow ;
While from hedgerows, half-concealed,
Creamy clusters hang, and show
Where the elder and the whitebeam,
Peeping, are revealed.

Dipping through the darkened air
Ghost-swift moths will dart and skim ;
Or with wings a-blur will fare
To and fro in dancing dim
Round their queens, gold-robed, and watching
From the grasses there.

WINTER

'TIS the hour of candlelight,
Gone is the cold sun.
Children homeward run
From the black and frosty night.

And through misty cottage panes
Thick with the white rime,
Watch the shadows climb
O'er the hedges in the lanes.

Giants and crooked witches loom
Through the creeping dark,
And the dog's short bark
Tells of goblins in the gloom.

Falls a long and silent fear
On the countryside.
Bats, that Pucks do ride,
Through the windows seem to peer.

And the winds are whispering low
Of the wicked elves
That do haunt bookshelves
Or by leafy ditches go.

Even when the sparks do shoot
And the cauldron hums,
Down the chimney comes
From the roof the owl's long hoot.

'Tis the hour of candlelight,
Gone is the cold sun.
Children homeward run
From the black and frosty night.

EAST-END DIRGE

O WALK you pitifully down the street, for there's my love lies dead.
With candles six beside his feet, and six beside his head.
And the mourners hold his winding-sheet as they stand about the bed.

O walk you pitifully down the street, for there used we to go
Beside the grey canal to meet, where the tall trees stand in row,
And in twilight time 'twas cool and sweet to walk together so. . . .

O walk you pitifully down the street, for there I'll go no more
With never a kiss again to greet, but only tears to pour,
And the listening to the mourners' feet a-shuffle behind the door.

O walk you pitifully down the street, till you turn you in your pride
To laugh and live, and drink and eat, and forget a man has died.
There's a public-house new built and neat, as you go, on your left-hand side.

P. H. B. LYON
(*ORIEL*)

A SONG OF THE MOOR

GIVE me a moor for the long white days,
Where the gorse flames high from the heather,
And a ribbon of road that meets a haze
Of glorious summer weather.
And innocent clouds that rim the sky,
Too snowy-white for treachery.

Give me a friend, or more than a friend,
Whose smile is good to remember,
And a summer grown riotous ere its end,
As the year drops down to September;
And hung in the skies of the afternoon
The misty impudent slip of a moon.

Give me a tall wood shadow-still,
Where timorous wild things scramble,
And a wall running rough up the side of the hill,
Close-liveried bright with bramble;
And paths that scatter away from the sun
With never a knowledge of where they run.

There's joy asleep where the lingering mist
Still clings to the drowsy heather;
And the sun and I, we have made a tryst
To awaken her together.
And he's tapping now on the window-sill,
To say he's missed me on the hill.

THE LOST LAND

"OH, where are the old kingdoms,
Where is the ancient way,
And the remembered city
Where once I used to play?"
"You stand within the kingdom,
You walk the city's street,
And still there throng about you
The folk you used to meet."

"Where are the merry voices,
And laughter, trouble-free,
And where are my old comrades
That used to play with me?"
"Their merry voices call you,
But you will not reply.
They touch your hand in welcome,
But now you pass them by."

"Where is my love departed
With her delightful eyes,
And heart too free for sorrow,
And lips too proud for sighs?"
"Along the road beside you
Your true love walks, and near,
But she may call for ever,
And you will never hear."

ANGUS'S SONG

ARE the gods forgotten in Morven of the hinds—
The beauty that slew men, the golden eyes that shone—
The gods that would be walking on the rocks of the winds,
That little men would die for the love of looking on?

Are the gods forgotten in Morven of the stags—
The old gods, the fair gods, that were too high for love;
The white feet pressing on the grasses of the crags,
The black hair hidden in the black clouds above?

The gods are forgotten in Morven of the glens.
The sun shines clearly, and gentle is the day.
Like snow in summer corries, like mist upon the bens,
The lovely gods of darkness are vanished away.

TO——

YOU stood before me in the dim half light
Beneath a blossoming tree ;
And all around
Flowered narcissus and forget-me-not ; the ground
Was one pale fragrant sea
Of delicate petals, pink and red and white,
And over all a dim blue mist of coming night.
I stood before you—just a foot apart,
With all the hunger of the world gnawing my heart.

That dim hair of yours—— ! like clouds before the day,
Where blossoms fell and slept.
And eyes like fire
Seen through the depths of mist-enchanted seas. Desire
Shook me like autumn storm. I could have wept.
For thy most passionless loveliness no way
I knew to conquer. Yet I scarce could stay
My lips, that thirsted for those lips of thine,
Thirsted, as never lips of man thirsted for wine !

I stood before you. Night came on apace.
The secret murmuring breath of darkened spring
Paused, moaning, thro' the quiet flowers. A wing
Of moon-white moth, rustling there beneath
The luminous blossom, stirred the throbbing space
Of passionate silence. God ! if I might seize that face—
Those frail invincible limbs to me—and press
Their life out in one burning, fierce caress !

But then I turned. The odorous darkness glowed
A secret jewel. Thro' dim trees I strode,
Nor ever turned again.
Thro' long grey years I lived, and strove with pain,
And now he is not master—only day
And night are filled with some dull ache of yearning, now a world away.
But still on warm spring nights, when slow blood courses fast
And throbs with memories stirring from the past,
And when I smell the apple-blossom scent
Or white narcissus, with their pale heads bent
Beneath the April dew—the fresh-cut grass,
Or when I see dim moonlit moth-wings pass,
The old pain wakens, never dead, and fires
Into live flame the sleeping old desires.
The love of youth and beauty and the bursting spring of life,
The days of love and laughter behind the gates of strife.
The old fierce yearning for the joy I never knew—
For the lips and the limbs and the soul of you.

WINTER

ALL winter thro' I longed for spring,
And said : " When flowers come again
I will cast off this gnawing pain."

But now these months no solace bring.
The rising life in flower and tree
But quickens this dull ache in me.

PROPHECY

CLOSE upon midnight will they come to me
And stand about my bed,
All lookin' at me hopelessly
And nothin' said.

How hard 'twill be seein' the little room,
The chair, the desk, the cot
Fade, and the window down the gloom
Draw to a spot.

'Tis a long time I'll be lyin' there
The bed-clothes apickin',
And suddenly burst out to swear :
" Damn clock's tickin' ! . . .

" Tick . . . tock . . . tick . . . tock ! O, go and throw it down !
Lord's sake send it tumblin' !"
Start in away to curse all brown,
Fall agrumblin'.

Mumblin' away—" You're dyin' now, old sport. . . .
Mummy . . . clock's stopped : good job. . . .
How short ! O mumsy dear, how short !"
Begin to sob.

Those around me will move restlessly—
One tap toes from cramp ;
But I'll be sobbin' listlessly,
My pillow damp.

That sob will presently be failin' too,
And I'll lie still in bed;
And they'll stand pond'rin' what to do,
Knowin' me dead.

Dawn will come—long low slits of moving grey;
A thrush will prod the pane;
And lookin' up, they'll see it's day
Come back again.

One voice sayin', " It's four," will draw a breath
And, turnin', fetch a groan,
Seein' my face as if by Death
Carved out of stone.

EVENING BY A LAKE

THERE is a voice of many streams,
And whispering of countless leaves,
And slumb'rous sound of distant life,
Like breathing calm of one who weaves
Across the night a way of dreams,
Whilst the light in shredded gleams
Comes to this vale, and in the west
Still the passing daylight gives
Visions of eternal rest.

There falls a calm upon the lake,
And on the land is nothing loud;
Clear is the evening-tinted sky
Save for some flecks of fleecy cloud
High in the heavens, swiftly flown
Like grey shreds of wool far blown
From immortal flocks that stray
In some unseen pasture-lands
Beyond the brink of day.

From the mists the night arises,
And the new-born moon appears
A bended wisp of silver light,
Which through a starry channel steers
Among the fresh-massed clouds until
The shadows shorten on the hills
Where the cow-bells make a sound,
Musical as waters wide
Rippling near the pasture-ground.

Evening by a Lake

[1914

Lo ! now the silent loom of night
Begins to weave a fold of sleep
Around my senses, which are now
Fast slipping from the world's strong keep.
Until at last, hid in this dell,
Half asleep, I cannot tell
Sounds of breeze from sound of stream;
Which is sky or which is earth;
What is real or what is dream.

ASLEEP

NOTHING to stir the quiet of her face ;
The shadow drawn from brow to knee
Blurs the dispassionate curving lines of grace,
Save where the light falls soundlessly
As dew upon the sea.

No sign to trace the spirit's journeying now
Through silence of enchanted lands,
But the white thought that lingers on the brow,
And the still imperceptible
Peace of the folded hands.

MORPHEUS

AT Thine altar, Most Divine,
We have laid our gifts of price,
Poppy-seed and honeyed wine—
These accept for sacrifice.
Hardly to world-wearied eyes
The perfumèd incense stirs
Where we kneel in reverent wise,
White-robed priests and worshippers.

Dimly burns the sacred flame,
Drowsily the tale is told
Of thy thrice-adorèd Name,
And thy beauties manifold.
Ere the midnight hearth grow cold,
Ere the dawn-star dim thy face,
Grant the vision, loved of old,
And the touch of thine embrace.

SHERARD VINES
(NEW COLLEGE)

A SONG FOR TO-MORROW

WHEN all the world is fine and new
In April or in May,
I'll take a stick from off the rack,
And tramp about all day.

It may be on my Berkshire downs
By knobs of grass and chalk,
With beechwoods in their hollow laps,
No better ground to walk.

It may be on my south sea-cliffs
I'll clamber in the sun,
While the spring surf rolls easily
And thuds like a far-off gun.

The heat will dance upon the stones,
And turf smell sweet and hot;
I'll come on girlish anemones
By stark elm-roots in a knot.

I'll come on nesting hen-linnets
In a hedge with new leaf on;
And under the hill, red villages,
And over the hill, new moon.

THE FORSAKEN LOVER

I SAW two girls go up the hill
With their arms about each other,
And the long green grasses
Their light footsteps did smother.

Sorrel and thistle
And the foxgloves in the ditch.
One was a pretty angel
And one a pretty witch.

In their pink cotton dresses
So lightly they did go,
And soon they loved each other
From head to the toe.

I saw a boy beneath the hill,
And a sad word said he :
" They love one another, they do,
And neither loves me."

WAITING

IS it not a weary thing
  Waiting your love through the year,
When the May birds mate and sing
  And the June trees bloom and bear?

It is weary, too, to try
  To earn for her, and be refused.
Watching week and week slip by,
  A bright-edged tool, unseen, unused.

You fear 'twill be so always—
  You shall taste no pomps and rites,
The broad love of trailing days,
  The hot wings of hovering nights.

Never, till you're grown too old
  But to let your food and bed
Warm you when the breezes cold
  Dance around your lockless head.

TO THE RIVER VILLAGER

IT is well for you to be
An earshot neighbour of the sea.

Perhaps at time of morning star
You know how flood-tide and young breeze,
Savourly, freshly, by the bar

Creep up and wash the village quays,
And swing some unhasped flap ajar,
And start a swishing in the trees.

Then the brown sails run free up-tide
And take up moorings, hull by hull,
With creaking blocks and chains aslide.

And as the sky becomes more full
Of gold, and spreads an highway wide
Across the sea-salt ruffled pool,

You know how good it is to be
An earshot neighbour of the sea.

OXFORD POETRY

1915

EDITED BY

G. D. H. C. AND T. W. E.

Our thanks are due to the Editors of *Poetry and Drama*, *The Oxford Magazine*, *The Westminster Gazette*, and *The Isis* for permission to reprint some of these poems.

G. D. H. C.
T. W. E.

DO WE BEGIN?

DO we begin or do we make an end
When you and I part who have had fair day?
If we begin then I am glad of it,
As a man kindling a wrought-silver lamp
And casting perfumes in it might be glad.
And if we make an end, I am glad too
As a man might be laying down his book
And knowing a fair tale has been well told.

SUPPOSING WE HAD GONE DOWN

SUPPOSING we had gone down into the dark
Under the fascinating swirl of waves,
Would you have given it me to clasp you round
Before the sea-gulls came to kiss your eyes,
And came long-fingered crabs to feast with you,
And was no further talk of our desire
Except the tide had made it musical
Bone upon bone of us a little while?

THE DANCE OF THE BLOOD-RED SUN

AND when the sun sank down
Toward the temple hill,
When day's last breath was blown
And cicala's note was still :
'Twas then Demeter's daughter
To the stream by the hill would run,
Would bend and kiss the grasses
And dance to a blood-red sun.

While cushats homeward wing,
Pan hears some footsteps pass,
As some first breath of spring
Go sweeping o'er the grass :
So slight, so swift, they pass.
And as the feet speed by,
A whisper shakes the trees—
They nudge them for a lie
And dream that no one sees ;
A tremor shakes the grasses—
"'Tis some young hero passes !"
But on Demeter's daughter
To the stream by the hill has run ;
Has bent and kissed the grasses,
And danced to a blood-red sun.

A KALENDAR

I MADE a Kalendar of Saints
To name upon my rosary,
And daily I entreat their aid for thee.

To guard thee during sleep
I name St. Veep ;
St. Prisca has thy wardrobe in her care,
And blithe St. Hugh the dressing of thy hair ;
St. Madoc aids the toilette of my fair.

When thou betimes to household tasks repair,
St. Silvester is there ;
St. Chad inspects the linen and the lace ;
Each polished spoon reflects the shining face
Of St. Remigius, minister of grace,
And o'er the meal presides St. Boniface.

To keep thy missal, tempting thee to read,
I name St. Bede ;
And later, when thy friends shall visit thee,
Ensuring that the talk be blithe and free,
I seek betimes the bland St. Alphege ;
Whilst to thy pen, lest haply thou shouldst need it,
Attends St. Deusdedit.

And when the little masque of day is over,
Gentle St. Damien of Villanova
Takes charge of thee, and all that thou shalt know
Of this hour's passing is that thou wilt grow
Dreamily willing for the night, and so
(Turning a bead in prayer to deft St. Probin
For thine unrobing)
To guard thee during sleep
I name St. Veep.

BLACK OXEN

I MARKED how black they were and strange, the oxen
That bore your body to a resting-place,
Where, when the work was done,
We stood bareheaded for a little space.

I marked how light you were to lower down,
And wondered if you knew that I was there;
And, railing in the place,
Remembered that you could not greatly care.

So you are dead because we buried you,
And oxen drew you to a resting-place.
You must be dead, for as we buried you
I trod the heaped-up earth about your face.

LAD'S LOVE AND LAVENDER

LAD'S love and lavender,
Rosemary and rue,
I picked them in a posy
And I offered them to you.

It was only lad's love,
But surely it was true;
Only wild grey lavender,
But fragrant as it grew.
I plucked the sprig of rosemary
For memory of you:
And was it to complete the tale
I tied it up with rue?

Lad's love and lavender,
Rosemary and rue,
I picked them in a posy
And I offered it to you.

T. W. EARP
(*EXETER*)

ECSTASY

YEARS longer than years go by in bleak enduring.
We bustle over humdrum,
toil at some littleness,

when suddenly a flame leaps up within us.

Those things sense knew are whirled away,
expunged,
and sight itself is blinded by the dazzle,
the blaze of glory.

Briefly then we live
till the dropped curtain.

May you have hours where I have had but moments!

THE CROWD

HERE are many different people,
all roaring with one voice.

Beware!
Go not too near!

Or you will lose your voice
and roar with them.

LOVE-POEM

I HAVE become so much a part of you,
alas !
and the worse part,

that you go down the street
and hear men's praises
with calm indifference ;

while I,
who follow,
smile
and am filled with pride.

NOTTS

"NOTTS,"
you said.

And I said,
"Notts—
oh yes,
of course,
but there are other places."

And then I was silent quickly,
for I remembered certain fields
where I played when I was a child,
with the November sunset over them.

CRANES

ALL day they have been busy about man's work,
swinging great hods of bricks with eager whirr,
but now they, too, endure the desires that lurk
haunting the hours of night.

They do not stir.

Erect they suffer metallic agony,
struck to a frozen gesture,
each a claw
twitched up at heaven.

All night long they see
star upon star,
and these they hunger for.

Motionless,
thrilled with longing,
they vainly try
to pluck a golden blossom down from the sky.

DEPARTURE

I HAVE been reading books
for about twenty years ;
I have laughed with other men's laughter,
wept with their tears.

Life has been a cliché
all these years.

I would find a gesture of my own.

SIX POEMS WRITTEN IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

I.

IN Quetta lamps are lighted,
And like a sound in dreams
The bugle calls at evening
Across the seven streams ;
How sweet and faint it seems !

Oh, here I am a soldier,
And here my heart must stay
Till twilight's in the barracks
And with the end of day
My heart is far away.

For Hannah Pass is rocky
And high is Murdar Hill,
But oh, for June in Hampshire
And the fields my people till
My heart is crying still.

The honeysuckle hedges
They will be dusty white,
Where grass-mowers go singing
Along the golden light
Down smooth fields out of sight.

Surely on some long evening
When rooks call down the lane,
And on the fields at twilight
All softly falls the rain,
We shall come home again ;

When faint, far cries of sunset
Are in the lime-trees cool,
And by the ancient spinney
Up from the hidden pool
The boys troop back to school.

For Hannah Pass is rocky
And high is Murdar Hill,
But oh, of June in England
And the fields our people till
Our hearts are dreaming still.

QUETTA, 1915.

II.

WHAT of the woods on summer evenings wide
We have looked down upon from Broadmoor hill,
And our dear pool beyond the Barkham ride,
Is this as sunlit and as silent still?

The summer evenings are as lingering still
Along the Owlsmoor heather golden, cool,
And where the dogs swam out by Barkham hill
No shadow falls on the unruffled pool.

Do you climb up by Sandhurst wood alone
To watch the moon rise over Eversley,
And where far up the glimmering pines make moan
Look down the valley and remember me?

Dream not of our old summers where the rain
Falls whispering towards the ancient Rhine;
Sleep and forget; though never now again
Shall we together thread the lands of pine.

Yet happier boys hour long shall loiter still
Along the Owlsmoor heather golden, cool,
And where our dogs swam out by Barkham hill
No shadow fall on the unruffled pool.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA, 1914.

III.

IN a garden where bees murmured
A droning sunny dream
First heard I that old story,
Thy story, Polypheme.
And half my heart enraptured
Held present peace for nought,
Weaving the long adventure
Along the looms of thought.
Yet to the tale had entered
The scent of lilac-trees
And down that ancient garden
The dreamlike sound of bees.
And to a tune more subtle
Beneath his warrior Greek,
The tune of endless summers,
I heard Odysseus speak.

This evening sailing eastward
That blue, rejoicing stream
I found thy fabled island,
Thy island, Polypheme;
And half my heart enraptured
Holds all but strife for nought;
Weaving a new adventure
Along the looms of thought.
Yet though I hear Adventure
Singing so clear and low,
My heart is drugged with memory
Of summers long ago,
And from the past there riseth
The scent of lilac-trees,
The sleepy, ancient garden,
The dreamlike sound of bees.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA, 1914.

IV.

ABOVE, the hot white high-road,
The cool, dim woods below—
The sunny road to Sandhurst
I knew so long ago.

Deep down, hot, through the pine-stems
In that deep, shadowy wood
Shows sunlight on the heather
Where you and Douglas stood,

And faint from over Bracknell
And Owlsmoor's leaf-strewn dells
Across the silent pinewoods
There comes a sound of bells.

Still lies that narrow clearing
Sunlit and sweet with bees,
And still keep watch around it
Unchanging, silent trees;

The hot, bee-haunted heather
Still from the highway shows,
But now along that heathland
No sundrowsed wanderer goes.

Only from over Bracknell
And Owlsmoor's leaf-strewn dells
Across the silent pinewoods
There comes a sound of bells.

QUETTA, 1915.

V.

THE last bell rings, the summer term is dying,
The chapel lights gleam out along the court,
Faintly the organ sounds, for old years sighing
That pass more swift than thought.

And then the undersound, the welcome thunder
Of thronging boys beneath the ancient gate—
Gay and well-loved, has any guessed, I wonder,
When comes the unquestioned fate?

At this last hour before the huge awaking,
Ere all the fruit of love and peace be shed,
Behold, your comrades for the great leave-taking
Throng up from summers dead.

They too have knelt, sun-flushed from July weather,
Down these long, lamplit aisles in evenings past,
And in old years were gathered here together
To say farewell at last.

Ah! many of this much wept-for phantom number,
Whose delicate youth made dear our summer land,
Fell in far wars and now forgotten slumber
In Sind or Malakand.

The organ fills with thankfulness and sorrow,
Murmur the tranquil prayers. O happy place,
How many here shall sleep with these to-morrow
That were thy earlier race?

Ah! mighty throng of schoolboys proud and slender,
Not here again shall you your Vespers tell;
The last hour ends; kneel down, give thanks, and render
To your dear youth farewell.

QUETTA, 1915.

VI.

STILL through the woods of childhood
With autumn one by one
The golden leaves go fluttering
Down shafts of woodland sun ;
The long path through the heather
Still finds the hidden pool
Where far through dell and spinney
The last bell sounds from school.

Oh, far across the meadows
By lone hill copses tall
Where through sun-chequered silence
All day the oak leaves fall,
By slanting, windless beechwoods
Leaf-strewn in valleys deep
Where lulled by hidden ring doves
The sun-drowsed copses sleep,

Faintly the far bell murmurs
At whose insistent call
Across her starlit courtyards
How loud the footsteps fall !
I see the lighted windows,
I hear the voices hum,
The great bell calls ' Come quickly,'
But I, I do not come.

Six thousand miles to eastward
My bones are buried deep ;
The bell rings on for ever,
They stir not in their sleep.
Yet through the huge dim woodlands,
Agelong by childhood's ways,
My happy spirit wanders,
Dreaming of olden days.

Chasma Tangi, Baluchistan, 1915.

*H. R. FRESTON**
(*EXETER*)

A GIRL'S SONG

HE would make me idle as the droning bees
In some aged pine-wood, sad at set of sun ;
You would make me splendid as the plunging seas,
When at call of morning the great tides shoreward run.

He would make me sigh for languor and repose,
Frail as some tall lily bruised by human hands ;
You would make me blush for joy, like a laughing rose
Woke to sudden splendour on sun-warmed lands.

Beauty lies in sorrow, lovely as the snow
Lying on a ruined town, that once was blithe and gay ;
Beauty wakes in gladness, like a dream of long ago
Waking into music at opening of the day.

* Killed in action in France, January 24, 1916.

SOMETIMES I WONDER

SOMETIMES I wonder if you know
How, when we meet in road or lane,
My heart leaps up and trembles so
I think it ne'er will quiet again :
Sometimes I wonder if you know.

Sometimes I wonder if you guess,
Behind each careless word of mine,
There lurks a passionate caress—
Although I make no outward sign :
Sometimes I wonder if you guess.

Always I find you calm, and yet
So strange your eyes, so strange your smile
Sometimes I think they hold regret,
A wished-for something all the while ;
Always I find you calm, and yet . . .

Sometimes I think you understand
That, when the magic hour draws near,
Suddenly I shall seize your hand,
And kiss your lips, and call you dear :
Sometimes I think you understand.

LAMENT

O WOULD that beauty clothed no living thing!
It is a curse that ever it should cling
To that which lies within the doom of death.

Why are you not a ring of tawny gold,
Why are you not a sapphire I might hold,
Rather than warm of blood and warm of breath?

For then love would not crave for love's return.
No more the need laboriously to learn
The baffling byways of a silent heart.

No more a pilgrim of the endless quest,
When in my hand the quiet gem should rest
In mute fulfilment of a mute desire.

No more the unattainable—the goal
Unreached by all the travellings of the soul—
The distant tremors of a fading fire.

AWAKENING OF THE BACCHÆ

WE were asleep in sleepy fields,
In summer-scented fields of hay,
Or where that heavy oak-copse shields
Pale bracken from the light of day—
We were asleep and dreaming endlessly.
No breath of May or June us from our dreams could sever—
Dreams like long furrows in a crested sea.
We were asleep, but now are awake for ever.

And as we woke we saw the stars
Stream overhead across the night,
Till all the East was streaked with bars
Of swiftly-growing milky light.
And when the dawn had swept across the sky,
Ah, past all hoping and past all endeavour,
We felt new life at every pulse-beat cry.
We were asleep, but now are awake for ever.

So it was nowise strange to see,
When we leapt up, the dappled skin,
The thyrsus twining wondrously,
The wine we steeped our faces in.
We felt the Bulls' breath burning on our brows,
The branding god-mark that will leave us never,
Strong in the wisdom which that touch endows;
We were asleep, but now are awake for ever.

FROM THE YOUTH OF ALL NATIONS

THINK not, my elders, to rejoice
When from the nations' wreck we rise,
With a new thunder in our voice
And a new lightning in our eyes.

You called with patriotic sneers,
And drums and sentimental songs.
We came from out the vernal years
Thus bloodily to right your wrongs.

The sins of many centuries,
Sealed by your indolence and fright,
Have earned us these our agonies:
The thunderous appalling night

When from the lurid darkness came
The pains of poison and of shell,
The broken heart, the world's ill-fame,
The lonely arrogance of hell.

Faintly, as from a game afar,
Your wrangles and your patronage
Come drifting to the work of war,
Which you have made our heritage.

Oh, chide us not. Not ours the crime.
Oh, praise us not. It is not won,
The fight which we shall make sublime
Beneath an unaccustomed sun.

The simple world of childhood fades
Beyond the Styx that all have passed ;
This is a novel land of shades,
Wherein no ancient glories last.

A land of desolation, blurred
By mists of penitence and woe,
Where every hope must be deferred
And every river backward flow.

Not on this grey and ruined plain
Shall we obedient recall
Your cities to rebuild again
For their inevitable fall.

We kneel at no ancestral shrine.
With admirable blasphemy
We desecrate the old divine
And dream a new eternity.

Destroy the history of men,
The weary cycle of decay.
We shall not pass that way again,
We tread a new untrodden way.

Though scattered wider yet our youth
On every sea and continent,
There shall come bitter with the truth
A fraction of the sons you sent.

When slowly with averted head,
Some darkly, some with halting feet,
And bowed with mourning for the dead
We walk the cheering, fluttering street

A music terrible, austere
  Shall rise from our returning ranks
To change your merriment to fear,
  And slay upon your lips your thanks;

And on the brooding weary brows
  Of stronger sons, close enemies,
Are writ the ruin of your house
  And swift usurping dynasties.

THE PRAYER OF THE VIRGIN MARY

GIVE me the strength for one more day
To do the ordinary thing;
To scrub and cook and watch and pray,
And tranquilly at night to sing
A lullaby to Jim and John,
And memories to the boy who's gone.

You know the wars and argument
Brought on the world by feckless men.
Preserve our home from discontent,
Bring back my eldest boy again;
And let us live among the strife
An orderly and simple life.

And when we go, as go we must,
My man and I, to burying-place,
Still let our children put their trust
In you and your unbounded grace,
And marry well, and live at ease,
And take strong babies on their knees.

HOME-SICKNESS . . . FROM THE TOWN

FROU-FROUERY and faint patchouli smells,
And debile virgins talking Keats,
And the arch widow in accordion pleats,
Artfully fringing with the tales she tells
The giggling prurient.
Life nauseous! Let the whole crowd be sent
To the chosen limbos and appropriate hells
Reserved in memory's blackest stagnancy.
Back, back! No Social Contract! From the teats
Of our old wolfish mother nature drink
Sweet unrestraint and lust and savagery.
Feel goat-hair growing thick and redolent
On loin and thigh; look back
And mark the cloven hoof-marks of the track
You leave, then forward eyes again; no wink,
Lest for an instant you should miss the sight
Of moony floating flanks and haunches white
Flashed by your fleeing nymph girl through the leaves.

PEACE

A COOL calm night,
And a glowing fire,
Then the stately toll of a chime,
Midst the stillness of thoughts
Seen through the haze of time ;
Lingering vaguely the while
A soft dull light,
And a tall grand spire,
Bold, black 'gainst the dusky sky,
An echo fading in space,
And the rising wind's sigh
Crooning, lulling—then sleep.

* Killed in action, June 6, 1915, in the Dardanelles.

FOR A FOLK-SONG

O LONDON, O London,
I've heard of thee and thine,
How wide and full the highways,
With shops so wondrous fine.

So brightly do they glimmer,
A man abroad by night
Would say the stars in heaven
Came down to give them light.

And there be mighty buildings
That cast their shadow far,
And strange unceasing noises
Such as in cities are.

O London, O London,
Mother of us thou art,
Who callest to thy children
And takest them to heart.

Where shall a man be resting,
And his body there found?
Be it far he sleeps, his soul
Is still on London ground.

O London, O London,
I must a journey go ;
And parting is a sorrow,
Surely a bitter woe.

Then shall we but forget thee,
And wander faithlessly ;
God put His curse upon us,
To dwell in the country !

WAR-TIME

DRUMS go forth to the marching,
And many battalions of fighters,
And the dark ships
Lie upon the sea waiting,
And the sound of the great guns
Is driven across the slanting sky:
But my heart is not gone with them,
My soul hath folded her wings
In a great silence,
And hath sore shame
Amidst the much shouting. . . .
Far away my soul hath flown
Searching, searching for forgotten Peace;
She, the clear-eyed one, the dove of the deathless gods,
She hath departed away from us,
And we are given over to darkness and hatred.
I will go far awandering,
Looking for my lost love,
For all the light of the heavens
Is fading about the faintness of her footstep. . .

DOMINO MEO

I WAIT at the cottage door—looking out on the dusty highway ;
Long, long have I waited, from the first red flush of the morning,
When the fragrance of all the world drifted out on the vagrant winds.
The men with their hornèd oxen passed by to the burnished wheat-fields,
Bright blue shirts on their backs, and gleaming scythes on their shoulders,
And behind them the women and girls clothed in crimson and russet,
Fresh from the deep night's slumber, with laughter beneath their lashes.
I hear the songs in the cornfields, the ripple of laughter ringing
Along the deserted highway ; the sun is rising to noonday,
And the sound of the reapers is still ; everywhere men are sleeping,
Seeking the shade of the branches in the tense, irresistible heat.
The dust lies white on the highway unstirred by the foot of the traveller.
I wait and the shadows grow longer—light breaths stir in the branches ;
And soon they are driving their oxen, with jingling bells on the harness.
The young men and maidens come laughing, with red corn sheaves on their shoulders ;
They turn and stare as they pass me ; wondering, ask one another :
"Who is it—whence comes he—this stranger, whom all day long she awaiteth ?"

And then pass on to their homesteads; the shadows lie black, and the cornfields,
Blood red, gleam in the sunset. Now a pale star has kindled
A torch in the west—another, and after, another come out,
Till the pale, flushed sky is aglitter with myriad on myriad of torches.
I wait—and shall wait till the time come, when he my master shall find me;
I feel not my limbs beneath me, they are numb with the long, long vigil.
The sunlight is left in the darkness, but the earth is crowned with starlight.
I strain my ears thro' the stillness—the stillness that hangs like a shadow,
And holds the breath of the world.
Deep breaths of fragrance enfold me—the fragrance of burgeoning blossoms,
Of rose, and of jasmine, and myrtle, and the deep purple flower of slumber.
Moths flit white in the blackness, brushing my face in their passing;
An owl hoots low in the distance; a night-jar croaks by the river.
I strain my ears thro' the darkness for the sound of passing footsteps;
I hear a step in the distance—the swift light tread of my loved one—
And my deep heart beats and trembles like the wings of a bird in flight.
He will come with his young lithe limbs, supple and bright as the panther's;
He will come, with his glorious face like lightning across the clouds,
And eyes like the deep night sky where clustering stars are the thickest,
That I bow and tremble before, for they are the shrine of my worship.
Lips that are fiery wine—lips that scorch and subdue;
I have woven the web of my life on the loom of my love for thee:

Lowly, perchance, the web, but glorious thrice was the loom.
All that was fairest and fiercest I wove, and the threads were resplendent.
I caught the light of the stars and the flash of the sun on the wave-tops,
The songs of an hundred birds, and the breath of the wind at midnight.
All the colour and sound and scent of the world have I gathered
And wrought in a shining web, belovéd, my master, for thee.
The steps come near on the highway—or, let them pause for a moment ;
There is your handmaid waiting : year upon year has she waited.

* * * * * *

Fool—thrice fool in your dreaming—the footsteps have passed without pausing ;
I saw his face in the darkness, but I could not move my lips
To cry aloud on his name, for my soul was dumb in its longing.
His face was glorious, heedless, and proud, and he recked not his lover
Stood waiting : he passed in the darkness—his footsteps were lost in the stillness.
And now, tho' I wait for a lifetime, he will not pass again !
I stretch my arms thro' the darkness—vainly—vainly in longing.
Oh ! thou, my dearly beloved, wilt thou not hear, tho' unuttered,
The wail of my cry for thee—the cry for a great prize lost ?

THE PRINCE OF ORMUZ SINGS TO BADOURA

WHEN she kisses me with her lips I become
A roc, that giant, that fabulous bird.
And over the desert vast, yellow, and dumb
I wheel, and my jubilant screaming is heard—
A voice, an echo, high up and glad,
Over the domes and green pools of Bagdad.

But when she kisses me with her eyes
My heart melts in me. She is my sun;
She strokes my snow. I am loosed, I arise.
A brook of water I run, I run,
Crystal water sunny and sweet,
Laughing and weeping, to fawn at her feet.

MIDDAY

THE earth is still : only the white sun climbs
Through the green silence of the branching limes,
Whose linked flowers hanging from the still tree-top
Distill their soundless syrup drop by drop,
While 'twixt the starry bracket of their lips
The black bee, drowsing, floats, and, drowsing, sips.
The flimsy leaves hang on the bright, blue air
Calm suspended. Deep peace is everywhere
Filled with the murmurous rumour of high noon.
Earth seems with open eyes to sink and swoon.
In the sky peace : where nothing moves
Save the sun, that smiles and loves.
A quivering peace is on the grass.
Through the noon gloam butterflies pass
White and hot, blue only to where
They can float flat and dream on the soft air.
The trees are asleep—beautiful, slumbrous trees !
Stirred only by the passion of the breeze,
That, like a warm wave welling over rocks,
Lifts and loosens the mass of drowsing locks.
Earth, too, under the profound grass
Sleeps and sleeps, and softly heaves her slumbrous mass.
The Earth sleeps ; sleeps the newly-buried clay,
Or doth divinity trouble it to live alway ?

No voice uplifts from under the rapt crust,
The dust cries to the unregarding dust.

Over the hill the stopped notes of twin reeds
Speak like drops from an old wound that bleeds.
A yokel's pipe an ancient pastoral sings
Above the innumerable murmur of hid wings.
I hear the cadence, sorrowful and sweet,
The oldest burthen of the earth repeat :—
All love, all passion, all strife, all delight
Are but the dreams that haunt Earth's visioned night.
In her eternal consciousness the stir
Of Judas or Jesus is no more to her
Than you or I : being all part of dreams
The shadowiest shadow of a thing that seems,
The images the lone pipe-player sees
Sitting and playing to the lone, noon breeze.
One note, one life !
They sleep : soon we as these !

THE TOWER

IT was deep night, and over Jerusalem's pale roofs
The moon floated, drifting through high, vapourous woofs ;
The moonlight crept and glistened silent, solemn, sweet,
Over dome and column, down empty, listening street.
In the closed, scented gardens the rose loosed from the stem
Her white, showering petals : none regarded them.
The starry thicket breathed odours to the sentinel palm :
Silence possessed the city like a soul possessed by calm.

Not a spark in the warren under the giant night,
Save where in a turret's lantern beamed a grave, still light :
There in an upper chamber a gold-eyed lamp was lit—
Marvellous lamp in darkness, informing, redeeming it !
For set in that tiny lantern Jesus, the blessed and doomed,
Spoke to the lone apostles as light to men entombed ;
And spreading his hands in blessing, as one soon to be dead,
He put soft enchantment into spare wine and bread.

The hearts of the disciples were broken and full of tears
Because their lord the spearless was hedged about with spears.
And in his face the sickness of departure had spread a gloom
At leaving his young friends friendless : they could not forget the tomb.

He smiled subduedly, telling in tones soft as voice of the dove
The endlessness of sorrow, the eternal solace of love.
And lifting the earthy tokens, wine and sorrowful bread,
He bade them sup, and remember one who lived and was dead.

And they could not restrain their weeping.
But one rose to depart,
Having weakness and hate of weakness raging within his heart,
And bowed to the robed assembly, whose eyes gleamed wet in the light.
Judas arose and departed : night went out to the night.

Then Jesus lifted his voice like a fountain in an ocean of tears,
And comforted his disciples, and calmed and allayed their fears.

Judas wound down the turret, creeping from floor to floor,
And would fly—but one leaning, weeping, barred him beside the door !
And he knew her by her ruddy garment and two yet-watching men :
Mary of Seven Sorrows, Mary Magdalen.

And he was frighted at her.
She sighed, "I dreamed him dead,
And that 'twas I who sold him by sin."
Then Judas fled
Out into the night ! . . . The moon had begun to set.
A drear small wind went, sifting, setting the dust afret. . . .
Into the heart of the city Judas ran on and prayed
To stern Jehovah, lest his deed make him afraid.

But in the spiry turret, hanging as if on air,
The disciples sat unspeaking. Amaze and peace were there.
For *his* voice, more lovely than song of all earthly birds,
In accents humble and happy, spoke slow, consoling words.

Then Jesus discoursed, and was silent, sitting upright, and soon
Past the window behind him slanted the setting moon.
And rising for Olivet, all stared betwixt love and dread,
Seeing the moon a ruddy halo behind his head.

FRANKLIN KANE

SILK I had for you, Madonna—you shook your small dear head—
"Silk I have and silk enough, a store of it," you said,
Content I laid the web away, you lacked some cotton thread.

A cup I filled for you, Madonna, but other hands than mine,
More meet, had given you to know the magic of the vine.
I poured within my empty cup fresh water for the wine.

A song I made for you, Madonna—it was my very best—
But your heart had heard the melody that will not let us rest,
Yet your lips had need of laughter, so I sang it as a jest.

Love I had for you, Madonna, because I looked on you,
But long ago your love was gone to pay its happy due ;
Love you had, and love enough, and yet your friends were few.

My days are sweet, Madonna—sweet to their farthest end.
You, rich beyond all telling, had need that I should send
Cotton thread and clear clean water and jesting and a friend.

A BALLAD OF DOOM

"LADIES, pretty ladies,
What do you lack?
Ladies, pretty ladies,
Choose from my pack.
All the way to Heaven and all the way to Hell
I went to fetch the fairings I have to sell."

"If you've been to Heaven, if you've been to Hell,
I will pay a pretty price for a thing that you can tell—
How does my true love and how fares the foe
Who slew him on a winter's night, very long ago?"

"I went the road to Heaven—it is a weary way—
I passed the open gate of Hell—you may reach it in a day—
Of all the many folk I saw, how should I know
Which was your true love and which was your foe?"

"My love he is a gallant, blue-eyed and debonair"—
"A thousand thousand such as he you may meet with anywhere"—
"He bears upon his breast the marks of wounds and kisses seven."
"I saw not any man like this in all the courts of Heaven."

"My foe he is a dour man and his hand is bitten through—
A little sign of love I gave for the deed he willed to do"—
"Lady, pretty lady, 'tis other news you lack."
"This fairing only, pedlar, will I have from out your pack."

"O lady, there in Heaven I saw the blessed stand
A-praising God, and one there was who had a bitten hand ;
And one among the damned I saw, who know not any rest,
Marks of wounds and kisses seven were burning on his breast."

"Go, go again, good pedlar, and bring me word again
Why he I hate is doomed to bliss and he I love to pain.
Go cry my name in Heaven, in Hell my name declare,
That I may know before I go what was answered there."

"Lady, pretty lady,
What do you lack ?
Lady, pretty lady,
Choose from my pack.
I've been again to Heaven, I've been again to Hell,
Here are news that you may choose from those I have to sell."

"O what said my lover and what said my foe ?
Tell me, trusty pedlar, that I may know.
I'll take the road to Heaven or go my way to Hell,
Give me news that I may choose and I will pay you well."

"I cried your name before the damned, and he who was your friend—
'A curse upon the silly fool who brought me to my end':
I cried your name before the saints, and he who was your foe
Caught me with his bitten hand and would not let me go.

"He held me long in my despite, conjuring me by God
And hope of Heaven, to come again back by the path I trod
And swear your false-fair lover had been for ever true,
And he your foe was damned in Hell for the deed he dared to do."

" I'll climb the road to Heaven and kiss the wounded hand
Of him who is a lover true, and he will understand.
Then will I take my way to Hell, unto my lover-foe—
False or true I love him, and God will let me go."

" Ladies, pretty ladies,
What do you lack?
Ladies, pretty ladies,
Choose from my pack.
All the way to Heaven and all the way to Hell
I went to fetch these pretty fairings I have to
sell."

THE RETURN

LAST night my virgin spirit sinned—
It fled along the ways of wind
Nakedly I, to seek your breast.
Knowing what chanced, I would not tell.
It crept ere moonrise back to Hell,
A little sobbing and distrest.

NIGHT

AND now dark sleep has climbed the highest hill,
And no last sunlight keeps awake the day;
One after one the stars rise up until
They gather to night's surface and the bay
Of heav'n is sparkling with their thousand lights.
Such silence and such stillness that afar
You seem to hear as ever on such nights
The flickering of every burning star.
Oh, what fair compass this the course to mark
Of wanderers in the night; for, strange it seems,
Though all is light in heaven the earth is dark,
Till stately through the trees the chaste moon gleams,
Round, in the silver fairest of her moods,
Like Dian hunting in her native woods.

PETROL, NIGHT, AND A ROAD

To C. P. H. and the B. S. A.

SWIFT life and light
On a desolate road
When the night is still deep
With its fulness of stars,
And there goes from the lamp
Set before, the command
"Let there be light,"
And a white patch of road
Swiftly flees onward.

Oh, who hath not felt it,
Greatly exulting,
That divine motion,
The glory of speed;
Who hath not felt it
But feels that his heart
Is one with the engines,
Braced to endeavour,
Strong for a trial
Of swiftness and strength
And fired with a joy
And a zeal to be onward?

Swift life and light
In the deadness and darkness
Of the deep of night :
In the silence of sleep
The strong delight
Of the rapid beat,
Urging the wheels
To follow the fleet
White beam on the road.

Swift life and light
And a wind that is hurling
Itself through the night
With a scream past our ears,
With a frantic might
Like a wretch distraught,
Mad in the dark
And fleeing the thought
Of fiends on the road.

Swift life and light
In the heavens above us,
Where worlds are burning
With fire and speed.
But fair as the stars
We with our lamp,
With quick-pulsing spark,
And shake of engine,
Speed on the road.
Shoot meteoric,
Adventuresome,
Glorious !

Too soon our lamp's light
Is merged in a lit street,
Losing its potency,
And the wheels once so fleet

Slow down, and the engine stops,
And sudden the stillness
Aches, till the ears
Grow used to the silence.

And I thank you now
For the joy of that journeying,
For the sense of man's vigour,
For the knowledge that Beauty
Hates not machinery
Neither modernity,
For the exultation
Of life and light
On the free, dark road.

DOROTHY H. ROWE
(SOMERVILLE)

AN OLD RHYME RE-SUNG

". . . HERE COMES AN OLD SOLDIER . . ."

DOWN the dusty highway, trooping with the stars,
Comes old Year, a soldier returning from the wars,—
Out-at-elbow, down-at-heel, shuffling in his shoe,
With a knapsack full of looting,
Of summertime freebooting,
Threadbare at the corners, where the sunshine filters through.

Who beheld the youth of him,—how he marched away,
Confident, resplendent, in the morning of a day,—
Heels of air and heart of grace, bragging of the Spring,
With the trumpets of the fourth Wind,
The near Wind, the North Wind,
And half the world as mad as March to hear his trumpeting?

Where's the martial pageantry that used to flout the sky?
Flung to sport by every air that blows the leaves awry;
While the old Year limps along, whistling out of tune,
And, gorgeous in his old rags,
Red rags, gold rags,
Flaunts the tawdry tatters of the glory that was June.

LAY

"Item, quant est des laiz, c'est une chose longue et malaisée à faire et trouver, car il y faut avoir xii. couples, chascune partie en deux, qui font xxiiii. Et est la couple aucunefoiz de viii. vers, qui font xvi.; aucunefoiz de ix. qui font xviii.; aucunefoiz de x. qui font xx.; aucunefoiz de xii. qui font xxiiii., de vers entiers ou de vers coppez. Et convient que la taille de chascune couple a deux paragrafes soient d'une rime toutes differens l'une a l'autre, excepté tant seulement que la darreniere couple des xii., qui font xxiiii., et qui est et doit estre conclusion du lay, soit de pareille rime, et d'autant de vers, sanz redite, comme la premiere couple."

EUSTACHE DESCHAMPS: *L'Art de Dictier.*

I.

MUMMERS! let love go by
With his crown upon his head,
Beaten royally
Of gold, heavy and red;
Your tinsel garments fly
To the trip of a lightsome tread,
The gusty gale has fled,
And your garlands are blown awry.

Sniggering, whisperingly,
What was the thing you said?
"Poor old love? Oh, ay!
Put him away to bed
With his wearisome song and sigh—
We've a ragtime tune instead."
But yours is already dead,
And his can never die.

II.

OXFORD! suffer it once again that another should do thee wrong,
I also, I above all, should set thee into a song;
I that am twice thy child have known thee, worshipped thee, loved thee, cried
Thy name aloud to the silence and could not be satisfied,
For my hands were stretched to clutch thee, draw thee up to my side,
And my heart has leapt and my breath has failed, to hear the tongue
Of Tom toll in the dark, and straight unpanoplied
My soul has almost died.

Bear with me as thou hast borne with all thy passionate throng
Of lovers, the fools of love; for the great flood sweeps along
From the hills into the sea, and all their boats go down with the tide;
And thou shalt stand unmoved, when the wreck of the world beside,
When the loveless cities of greed slip down in their ruined pride
And crumble into the gulf of Time. Thou shalt be strong
With Thebes and On and Memphis, where the deathless gods abide,
A city sanctified.

III.

IF I shall sing of thee in antique rime,
Stately and cold as moons that near eclipse,
And intricate as bells rung down in time,
It is to keep the madness from my lips,
Whereby the lover's tongue stumbles and trips,
Uttering foolishness, and thy sublime
White brow is marred with mockery—garlands to whips,
Sceptres to reeds are turned, and worship to a crime.

Think, magic city, that as each dear chime
Thrills the mute, friendless night, or stealthily drips
Through all the noise of noon from prime to prime,
Continually some new soul comes to grips

With thee and all the power of thee. He slips
To seaward, weighs out anchor from the slime,
Following the wake of countless golden ships
Thy figure at the prow, to some far western clime.

IV.

THOU art so magical
Thou makest me afraid,
Lest some great bolt of desolation fall,
And thou in dust be laid
With Babylon and Nineveh the tall ;
Or some enchanted lake will cover thee all,
And through quadrangle, cloister, colonnade,
Four-coloured fishes swim, and, faint and small,
Up through the waves at midnight the bells of Magdalen call,
Through midnight waters mighty Tom will call.

Or when, perchance, the pall
Of some nocturnal shade
Unstarred, more dewy-dark than usual,
Lifts upon hill and glade,
I fear lest sunrise strike upon no wall,
No winding street nor ghost-white pinnacle—
Only on level woodlands, lonely made
Of thee, as once, by arts incredible,
The holy castle vanished behind Sir Percival,
At morning light was not, for Percival.

V.

ONCE Nimue, the lady of the lake,
Wound aged Merlin in the coils of sleep,
And cast the silence of the luminous, deep
Green forest all about him, there to take

His rest for ever ; no alarm might shake
The stillness, no wild creature snuff or peep
On him, no knight arouse him with the leap
Of his tall war-horse plunging through the brake.

And that enchantress, Venus, for the sake
Of young Pygmalion, weary to see him creep
Kissing his idol's senseless foot, and weep,
Smote life into the stone, and so did slake
His thirst of love. And thou ? The willows quake
By the clear Cher, thick-clustered dewdrops steep
The heads of mossy gargoyle-beasts, that keep
Their wide, shy smile. Age dreams and young men wake.

VI.

ONLY one painter could have painted thee,
Still mother with the unimpassioned eyes,
Dark with the mystery
Of many centuries,
Couldst thou have walked in a woman's guise
Under the blue, exulting skies
Of Italy
In the great sunrise.

All things that were, and now are, and shall be
Graven upon thy heart, have made thee wise
To smile inscrutably ;
All aid thou couldst despise
Of reeds and fanciful psalteries,
Strange face of kindness and cruelties,
Immutably
Without surprise.

VII.

THY name is as the scent of things departed—
Of myrrh and unremembered frankincense,
Stored in the niches of dim chapels, dense
With hidden tales of penitence,
With wreathèd prayer and desperate vows red-hearted,
Whose ancient eloquence
Knocks on the doors of sense
When in thy haunted shrines I kneel without defence ;

Like one that sails on ice-dark waters, charted
By wrinkled mariners at dear expense,
Who trims the sails with careful diligence.
And though the pole-star burn intense,
Shudders to know how many ships thus started,
Feeling the wrath commence
Of old experience,
And drowned green ghosts that crawl from unsuspected dens.

VIII.

HOW shall I let thee go? for thou didst wring
All myself from me ; I would not withhold
One citadel, but gave thee everything.
Perhaps a better wisdom had controlled
The gift, had kept some solitary string
Thou couldst not shake, some secret still untold,
So that thou hadst not left me unconsoled
At thy departure. All this sorrowing
Would not be mine to-day had I been strong of old.

But now—too late ! the fleeing shadows bring
The unsheathed swords of morning, sharp and cold.
Thou breakest from me—I am weakening—
Last night wast thou so mighty? I behold

Glimmering betwixt the feathers of thy wing,
Westward the stars, eastward the sunrise gold.
O stay ! my hands about thy feet are bold.
Curse me or bless, thou godlike, deadly thing,
By the Lord's living face I will not loose my hold !

IX.

THE moonlight over Radcliffe Square,
Small sunset spires that drowse and dream,
Thin bells that ring to evening prayer,
Red willow-roots along the stream,
And perilous grey streets, that teem
With light feet wandering unaware,
And winter nights with lamps agleam,
Globed golden in the violet air ;

Odd nightmare carven things, that stare
Spell-stricken in a voiceless scream ;
The worn steps of an ancient stair,
With oaken balustrade and beam—
Such things are weightier than they seem :
These marks my branded soul must bear,
Pledges that Time cannot redeem.
And yet God knows if I shall care !

X.

" ISEULT, Iseult ! day follows day
With weary feet ; the bitter spray
Flies fitfully over the waterway.
The gull's harsh crying
Is cruel as death. O far away
Are the years when we made holiday ;
My hair and beard show very grey
In the bed where I am lying.

"All the wonderful songs of May,
Roundel, madrigal, virelay,
I cannot remember them now to play,
For yesternight I was trying
To bring them back, but the harp-strings fray,
And I only know that the songs were gay."
Thus and thus did Sir Tristram say
In the hour that he was dying.

XI.

THEY say the waters cannot drown
Love. I believe it. Set this down:
That I believed and uttered thus.
Whatever things the years discrown,
Somehow, love, I would have it known
My youth was not ungenerous,
And I could kneel to kiss thy gown,
As every honest lover does.

For when beneath the winter's frown
Forth to the forest goes the clown,
Whistling, when winds are blusterous,
To gather kindling for the town,
There on his faggots sere and brown
A few dry leaves hang dolorous
In witness of the spring's renown—
And it is even so with us.

XII.

I, EVEN I,
Have loved in joy and dread.
Now my spinning-wheel I ply
Like the peasant-girl, that wed

With a king (they say), and try
With hands and heart of lead
To spin out a golden thread
From the dusty straws and dry.

I will not weep nor cry
For work unperfected,
Still labouring faithfully
I have no tears to shed.
For love goes harping high,
And is rememberèd,
Mummers! when you are sped
With all the lips that lie.

SISTERS

YOU had not heard the clang of life, it seems,
In those dim shadows of backwater days,
Save in the weary barrenness of dreams
A vision of burning heights and dancing ways.

And so one day you dared; and down the stair
Crept trembling—through the door—into the street;
And oh! to find your little soul laid bare,
And cast it thrilling at the city's feet.

So you have loved and you have lived, it seems;
And they are silent now—forgotten days
Save in the agony of sleepless dreams,
Forgotten heights, how cold, and shadowy ways.

But in the grave I think you smile to hear
Your myriad sisters pass, their hungry eyes
Dark with the torment of a restless fear,
Long-buried hopes and wan-faced memories.

Death holds you in his arms: your bitter quest
Has given you sleep at last: you could but die:
These are your sisters, envying your rest,
And one by one they join you where you lie.

GODSTOW

APRIL sent foolish blood about our hearts,
Waking old madness : we had planned high tea
Under the sun at Godstow—it would be
Like an old April . . . and so we played our parts.

There was a froth of hawthorn, and you said
How love was very son of Truth begotten,
Undying, unchangeable . . . and I'd forgotten
All save the pulses drumming in my head.

Twilight comes cool in April. You were thinking
"Not yet the end, not yet the end!" I thought
"Dear fools! Since when have we two grown so old
That we are blind how love is fallen to nought,
And there's but lust in kisses?" We went on drinking
While the stream laughed and chattered—and tea was cold.

SONGS ON THE DOWNS

I.

THIS is the road the Romans made,
  This track half lost in the green hills,
Or fading in a forest-glade
  'Mid violets and daffodils.

The years have fallen like dead leaves,
  Unwept, uncounted, and unstayed
(Such as the autumn tempest thieves),
  Since first this road the Romans made.

II.

A miser lives within this house,
His patron saint's the gnawing mouse,
And there's no peace upon his brows.

A many ancient trees and thin
Do fold the place their shade within,
And moan, as for remembered sin.

NARCISSE—MALLARMÉEN

YOUR eyes to me are moonlit seas,
where rove my sea-gull dreams like souls,
where coral roses keep their tryst
with large translucent bees,
where sea-weeds kept in amber bowls
whisper like eager girls,
where leaves of lily-pearls
wander amongst cold gleaming eyes,
and where the dream-entrancèd skies
tremble, grape-coloured, starlight-kist.
But in your inmost eye I see a boy,
a wondrous fair-limbed flower-bodied boy,
gazing into an amethyst.

CHINOISERIE : SAMAINESQUE

THE Spring is come, Belovèd, we shall float
White lotus lamps upon the shimmering stream,
And watch the sunset's passion waste and fade,
An amber dream.

I'll weave thee jasmine garlands for thy throat,
Enmesh bold poppies in thy stormy hair,
And heap thy lap with tender blossom snowed
By the tall pear.

But oh to-night, Belovèd, play thy lute,
And lean thy cheek to mine and softly sing
A fragile princess in her springtime dead,
And a lone king. . . .

Love, through thy finger-lattices I see
Full of desire thy passionate longing eyes,
And lo ! the moon like an impetuous flower
Bursts in the skies.

EPITAPH

"HERE lies a fool for whom no tears are shed,
Here lies a fool one woman would have wed."
My glory and my shame go hand and hand,
So shall my soul in hell be comforted.

GOBLIN FEET

I AM off down the road
Where the fairy lanterns glowed
And the little pretty flittermice are flying:
A slender band of grey
It runs creepily away
And the hedges and the grasses are a-sighing.
The air is full of wings,
And of blundering beetle-things
That warn you with their whirring and their humming.
O! I hear the tiny horns
Of enchanted leprechauns
And the padding feet of many gnomes a-coming!

O! the lights: O! the gleams: O! the little tinkly sounds:
O! the rustle of their noiseless little robes:
O! the echo of their feet—of their little happy feet:
O! their swinging lamps in little starlit globes.

I must follow in their train
Down the crooked fairy lane
Where the coney-rabbits long ago have gone,
And where silverly they sing
In a moving moonlit ring
All a-twinkle with the jewels they have on.
They are fading round the turn
Where the glow-worms palely burn

And the echo of their padding feet is dying !
O ! it's knocking at my heart—
Let me go ! O ! let me start !
For the little magic hours are all a-flying.

O ! the warmth ! O ! the hum ! O ! the colours in the dark !
O ! the gauzy wings of golden honey-flies !
O ! the music of their feet—of their dancing goblin feet !
O ! the magic ! O ! the sorrow when it dies.

THE LOVER MADE LIGHT BY CIRCUMSTANCE

WHO may have seen the trees grow tall,
Or watched what gait imperial
The lord the sun from hour to hour,
From throne to throne by his blue hall
Makes, and have known his stride get slower,
Such might a patient lover be
Whose love runs deeper than the sea.

But I? How can I contemplate
Patiently, with good will to wait
Some slow maturing of desire?
Love meets me suddenly, and straight
Scarce knowing, all my bones run fire!
Fire blooms within me and without:
To-morrow I am sent about.

I take to-morrow's crooked road,
My heart a wound, my fate a goad,
Who may not sleep more nights than one
To build foundations deep and broad,
And do as true lovers have done,
And give my handicraft my love,
Nor may love's habit find a groove.

The Lover Made Light by Circumstance

On whom the dust falls white, because
A day's march carries whence he was
More happy than to hope his day
Will bud and blossom ere it pass,
And God's hands hurry him away,
Men may call "light lover," nor see
Fit ground for his apology.

MODERN BEAUTY

THE month of May is over,
The green is crushed with red,
But God has raised the clover
To hide his quiet dead.

Look not upon these temples
Of cloud hewed by the wind :
Rather these weary waggons
And dust flung up behind.

Our windows gape with blackness,
Our linen sheets are soiled ;
All sorry are our women,
For each of them is spoiled.

Rather the broken body
Than body full of light,
Rather the skeleton of a house
Where none lie down at night.

ON TIRING OF A CERTAIN SUBJECT

DAMN sex! Let us drink of this raw purple wine—
If it blisters your throat, that is no fault of mine;
We'll talk of all good things that met us together,
From the shape of a spire to our good sailing weather.

Let's wrangle no more about woman and man
While bread's on the table and wine's in the can,
The sun to south-west, and a wind coming over,
Sweet seasoned with quickset and beans and red clover.

Rare towns we may mention, the little and old,
With pavements of cobble, innkeepers of gold,
Where, turning the corner by Jubilee clock,
We ran into Dusk in a comely blue frock.

Of the slant of the West with its head in a cloud,
And streams fed by sea wind, brown, lusty and loud,
Of the road by the cliff and the road down the combe,
The highroad abroad, and the level road home.

Why, here's to 'em all; and of each road a story.
The halt and the meeting, and end of day glory,
When at ease in a garden, some cottage beside,
Our pipe fire glowed up, and their heaven fire died.

Here's days full of work seven times worth the doing,
Plain food for plain men, and for strong men strong brewing,
Here's all that does good to our sinew and mettle;
And for God's sake leave Sex to some others to settle!

TO MASTER ROBERT HERRICK: UPON HIS DEATH

SWEET Robin Herrick, friend
Who Death himself could fend
With song, until the end

When Death, poor dunderhead,
Grew tired of play, and said
You must be off to bed,

So sent you to your sleep,
So deep, so endless deep—
Why, if a child will weep

Who's kist and sent away,
(Yet night itself's half-play
And promise of next day)—

What Good-Night's yours, alone
To depths of silence gone
And heard and seen of none?

THE GRASS IS COLD AND WET, THE DEW IS SET

THE grass is cold and wet, the dew is set
Where we together lie.
But love will keep us warm ; we'll take no harm,
Belovèd, you and I.
The moon shall shine slantwise upon my eyes
While it shines full on yours,
And I shall see them clear, which are more dear
Than all that night obscures.

Put out your hand, and see, how cold they be,
The dewdrops on the ground,
Drenching the grass : breathe full, how sweet and cool
The vasty night around !

HARK, HOW THE BIRDS DO SING AT EVENING

HARK, how the birds do sing at evening :
This doth the air possess.
Oh, this the quiet air doth wash from care,
Doth fill with loveliness.

To me now better this than any kiss,
Than any lovèd voice—
Better than any speech, when each with each
Sweet lovers do rejoice.

Better to stand and see how goldenly
All light and sound do end—
O Love, what hast thou done beneath the sun ?
What have we done, sweet friend ?

OXFORD POETRY

1916

EDITED BY

W. R. C., T. W. E., AND A. L. H.

DEVACHAN

THE bells of Magdalen ringing, and the dusk
Creeping in filmy veils about the trees,
A winter sunset fading in the sky;

These things I shall remember when I die;
Your hair, just stirring in the cool night breeze,
By the open window; the crackle of a husk

In the glowing fire, flaring yellow-white
For one brief instant; beech trees in November
That fringe some sloping ploughland, Elsfield way;

The white and crimson splendour of the May
O'er shadow'd waters: these I shall remember:
And all the starry wonder of the night.

THE FAIRY LAND OF SHIPSCAR

IN Shipscar beyond the wold the rivers run brown as beer,
And the women are not cold, and the babes are darling and dear.
The churches are white with praying, and the priests wear copes of gold,
And the princes go clad in scarlet, fold upon splendid fold,
And the youths have hair like daffodil in Shipscar over the wold.

And in spring-time the apple-blossom foams there in a rosy cloud,
Like a goddess with melting bosom over her shepherd-boy bowed,
And the sunsets show wonderful crimson, they faint o'er the occident crests,
When the flame of the great sun dims on Vandale and birds to their nests
Flit, and the lazuline green of the hesperal heavens is spread
And the moon like a lily is seen to lift up her beautiful head.
Then the stars show their frail flower-faces like primroses honeyed and pale.
They glide in their own dancing-places as ships on Oceanus sail.
Yea, all night long in their choirs the stars will go round and round.
Their limbs of translucent fires are treading the heavenly ground.
O, the beat, beat, beat of their dancing in their windy palaestras of gold,
Their angelical aeromancing in Shipscar over the wold!

And the day from her chamber stealing in the uttermost gates of the morn,
Is a mystery mild revealing eyes washed from sorrow and scorn,

Is a river of reconciling as her loveliness slow forth-streams
Into gentlest slumber, beguiling the dallying daimon of dreams,
Scattering wild white asters while the cocks clamour loud and far
To the white prince healed of disasters, Lucifer the Auroran star.

And the winds of the Spring bring dreams when from Araby softly they blow,
And the thorn-tree buds by the streams into foam-stars of virginal snow,
Bring dreams to the wonderful Queen in her castle beyond the world,
Whose mantle of violet sheen with swans and lilies is pearled,
And her orange hair rushes down to her beautiful slender feet,
And beneath her exquisite crown her eyes like waters are sweet,
And she dreams in her lazuline chamber of faces that once offered her
Mysterious chaplets of amber and marvellous caskets of myrrh,
And she dreams how the pikes shall be broken and the banners of tournament furled,
And the faery peace-word spoken in her castle beyond the world.
How the hearts of weary lovers shall kiss like doves in the end,
And how when the veil uncovers, the face be the face of a Friend!
Ah me, the mild kisses unpassionèd when April sighs through the fret
Of Oread anemones fashionèd ere Chaos could night beget,
Ere earth was severed from water and flame from the blue air cold,
And the Father of all from his daughter in Shipscar beyond the wold!

THE GERANIUMS

IN empty towns, where no one ever comes,
Behind the silent panes, pale petalled faces,
Waxen, the guardian plants of shadowed places,
Stand in stiff pots the sad geraniums.

Vermeil and white, they faint in cloistral airs,
Watching the small fires and the starvèd walls:
Grey dawns affright them, clinging twilight falls
Coldly about them, virgin dreams are theirs.

Mirrors and solemn chests reflect their pride:
Stones of dead streets and long-forgotten squares,
Sad musty corners, subtly smelling stairs,
Are by their painted blossoms sanctified.

HISPANIOLA

BLUE trees; the hornèd mountain looms behind,
His huge foot in the sea, his crest of snows
Flushed into mystery by the dying rose
Of sunset and the frail faint-fingered wind.

And ships like weary birds with trailing wings
Drift homeward over the violet bleeding sea.
Tall palms against the Sun's death mightily
Lift their frayed crowns like lean barbarian Kings.

And sad white cities by the burning waves
Hear from gilt cupolas the bird-like call
Of Marian bells announcing even-fall
In ancient churches like gaunt perfumed caves.

And a woman like a leopard, at whose breast
A crimson rose burns like a splash of blood,
Sits in a weary contemplative mood
Confessing that after all Quiet is best!

THE STATION

UNDER the heavy clock the moving crowd
Circulates busily; but here and there
A group stands waiting, with a frequent glance
Up at the silent dial: a porter, bowed
Beneath his load, catches their casual stare;
Pausing to shift the weight, misses his chance
Of motioning them aside, for they have turned
Back to their careless talk, and staggers round
Another way. Slowly a heavier pile
Trundles along, and the whole scene is churned
Into a tangled mass until a sound
Calms it again, bringing a mutual smile
Of recognition, as a distant shriek
Dies into rumbling clankings drawing near.
Anticipation seems to isolate
Each one again. Some feel that they must speak,
Speak, and not scream, because of sudden fear
Of this thing coming, a relentless fate,
On, on, on, nearer as the seconds pass:
It looms in sight, drowning the petty strain
In admiration, sends through every nerve
A glow of pride; under the smoke-stained glass
The ponderous engine shoulders, and the train
Slopes heavily to stillness round the curve.

ADVENT

WHY make such terrible talk of thrones and flames
And trumpets out of the void dark? You know
God walked in a cool garden when the world
Was at her birth, and in due time he bore
The patient agony of her human shame
Less on the cross than in a garden at eve.
And so the end too shall be on quiet wise.
God and the Lady Mary shall walk forth
In the cool evening, and pluck some flowers
To put them in their hands and their bright hair:
But there are flowers that they will not pluck.

TO N——

ALL day have I been busied about you
And pondered over intimate ceremonial
To crown love perfectly. To-night I know
That love is perfected with contemplation,
Served with calm worship and cool frankincense,
And aureoled with the white spiritual fire
Of his austerity: for Love is God.

O Word made flesh and born of woman, love
Abiding with us, we behold thy glory,
And know none other way of coronation
Excepting thorns, excepting Golgotha.

Because I have been busied about you
To-day, and seen love paramountly crowned
With his own crown; because the peril of thorns
Is overcrowning you; to-night I know
I shall not have my purpose of your beauty,
Or find if that were happiness after all,
I that am sorry enough with love already.

IS THE END STILL VERY FAR?

IS the end still very far? Not very far,
O my beloved. One more hill and vale
And life is over like a pleasant tale
Well told, and like the waning of a star
Under the dawn : and we can lay us down
And sleep awhile, and wake to hear the sea
Sounding her passionate symphony
Beneath us—finding in a little town,
Where we shall free us out of all our stress,
An argosy to lead us forth with singing
And tread with gilded feet the water, bringing
Our souls to fair isles of more gentleness,
Where the white domes of fretted palaces
Flash under crimson skies on quiet seas.

THE APPLE ORCHARD

AN olden book is on my knee,
And Italy's sky is shining
About the casement of my room
Where no sad fool is whining;
For love saith sorrow hath no sway,
And soul hath no repining.

O make a song upon a day
When apple trees are blowing;
When maids go courtin' by the May,
Eyes sweet where love is showing.

An olden book is on my knee,
Its pages quaintly telling
Of clerks and knights and kingly pomp
Alive in summer's dwelling,
Where all the bees in haunted glades
Are busy with their singing.

O make a song to dance alway
When apple trees are blowing;
And you drink beer and suck a clay
While cocks are loudly crowing.

Boccaccio's close were not more sweet
  Than the pleasaunce that I look on,
Where marguerite and gillyflower
  Are nodding in profusion;
And love walks there in lily white
  Unto my sweet confusion.

O glad my heart upon a day
When apple trees are blowing;
Fair Amoret is by the way
With eyes of summer's showing.

LOVE PLAYS IN THE SOUTH

O YOU at play with winds in the South,
Spare you ever a thought to me
As you watch the dance of the fickle sea
In the breath of a wind-capped morn.
Or have you flown to the mast of scorn,
O you with your beauty and youth?

I never hear from you in the South—
Not a whisper or word to say
That it's ill or well with you to-day:
Ah, have you forgotten so soon
The days my threshold kissed the shoon
Of your beauty and your youth?

From Wytham looking to Oxford's towers—
When Oxford is Italy,
I think of a window known to me
And brushed with lilac bloom:
How within I had filled the scented room
With full and splendid hours.

And a voice I knew had tuned those hours
To a key of richest tone
That love in the South had never known
Though He were in Italy:
O you at play with the winds at sea
Have you wished again they were ours?

But a silence broods—not yet, not yet,
A whisper or word to say
It's ill or well with you to-day :
Or that you will remember soon
How once you lingered to make a tune
You know I can never forget.

THE AWAITERS OF THE ADVENT

STRAINING last night to slip the gyve of fate
And dream the unconditioned, my soul fell
To that cold toneless utmost verge of hell
Where the sick voices by the Ivory Gate
Pray mumblingly "O Thou Predestinate,
Slave of the world, Spirit intolerable,
When will thy fire's returning miracle
Impregnate Time, that we may love and hate?"

These mutterings are of men long underground
Who, when they knew the chain of hours and places,
Contemned the comfortable body, and found
More sweet chimaera's kiss. All night they sigh
Numbly, thin lean lips stammering, and their faces
Pale with the lust they did not satisfy.

THE SEA

O FATHOMLESS, incurious Sea,
What ails thee?
Thou hast drawn down into thy deep,
Strange-denizened profound of sleep
All that is rich and rare and proudly tended,
All that is homely, that is undefended.
These things were ours, vain or desirable—
Caskets of ebony whose jealous sable
Enshrined some lovely friend, and ships of gold
Freighted with fabled wealth, and all the old
Sweet, customary things—these cannot slake
A thirst so foreign. Wherefore dost thou take
Neither to yield nor treasure, youth and age,
Squalor and pomp alike for heritage?
O fathomless, insatiate Sea,
What ails thee?

GOD'S FOOL

"WHAT said God's Fool to you ere he passed by,
Pranked in a damasked robe, his cloak awry
Vermeil and rose; why did you bid him stay;
What wild thing said he, that you looked away
And laughed all suddenly in strange inconsequence
Ere he passed singing hence,
And closed your fingers on a rose of gold
Tossed mocking-wise into your grudging hold?
What said God's Fool to you ere he passed by?"

"He did but bid me fashion out of straw
A lance to tilt defiance at the sky,
And even as I laughed I saw
The lovely dream of folly fade and die
Unclaimed, in proud impenitence:
Yet since I wear his golden rose of pain,
Some day when I must fashion my defence,
This shall God's Fool remember, nor disdain
To claim me kin, when I come tardy by."

T. W. EARP
(*EXETER*)

THE CALIPH WALKS

TO the small tavern what cloaked guests have come?
The wine flows faster and more swift the jest,
Madly the dancer answers pipe and drum,
And now the hunched musicians play their best.

Wrapped in their dark, the old blind beggars moan,
Nor shall night heal their woe so often told,
When suddenly in their midst a purse is thrown,
And a queer knowledge cries that it is gold.

Now old uxorious men feel quick alarm,
For shadowy lutanists send a snatch of verse
To float in at their window with strange charm,
The casement closes to a growling curse.

Along the street light laughter ripples down,
And through the dusk an echo of delight
Runs like a whisper through the drowsy town,
Haroun the Caliph is abroad to-night.

THE GLASS OF WATER

IF we could but forget by heart
The many things we never knew,
Should we not give a greater part
To what is fanciful and true?

In vain the cold museum tries
To break with labels from its dream,
But still a headless torso cries,
Against our knowledge things yet seem.

The pure conception grandly flings
A path beyond the precipice,
And soon a miracle of wings
Will quit the sleeping chrysalis.

The poet, calm above all age,
Must be the actor with his fan,
The swift horse, blossom, joy and rage,
Within the booth of his Japan.

Ah, could we win that ideal first,
Clear water in the glass that stands
Transparent, patient for all thirst,
The lilies never grasped by hands!

IN BROCELIANDE

IN the midst of the forest of silence,
Where even the leaves are mute,
Where never a bird wanders,
She plays upon a lute.

With fingers gently passing,
She touches golden strings,
Till the trees almost remember
The long-departed wings,

And the knights and the gay ladies,
And the music that went before,
And the days of joy and passion.
They will find these things no more.

One plaintive lute recalling
The loud citoles and shawms,
She alone has not left them,
Of the beautiful, noble forms.

If she would cease from playing,
The people with hearts of stone
Would lead her from the forest,
And set her on a throne.

She would be bright with jewels,
She would sit crowned on high,
But if she left the forest,
Alas, the trees would die.

In the midst of the forest of silence,
Where even the leaves are mute,
Where never a bird wanders,
She plays upon a lute.

φίλους ὀλέσαντες ἑταίρους

WITH us the sorrow : they are happy now,
As all who sleep are happy, in forgetting
Their pleasures past : Death cannot disendow
Only—there's benefit in life-blood-letting.
Only for us the sharp remembrance-sorrow
In future pleasures, by their pleasure less :
Nor pain nor pleasure is in thy to-morrow
Thou dumb deliverer Forgetfulness!
Their rotting bodies rotting Flanders fields
Will serve to swallow. Time will serve to stem
Sorrow for them : to Time all sorrow yields.
Weep while thou list, my heart, but not for them—
Weep for thy pleasure in the love that ends
With them, my pleasant fellowship of friends.

PLEADING

ARE we not all as unknown merchantmen
Come from a distant haven, freighted all
With curious cargo of unsorted wares?
And if the ensign wavering over us
Chance at the first to be unrecognized,
What matter? Surely nothing can ensure
The worth of all the hidden merchandise
Save but to see. And if without assay
One have dismissed a sea-worn argosy,
Deep-laden as the ships of old that came
From Ophir,
Wave-weary, seeking the long harbourage
So often miraged in the clouds of hope. . . .
Well! to the deep it must beat out again,
Drive back into the weary silences.

* * * * *

Why should one thwart the Sower as he sows,
Or burn the furrows ere the seed be sprung
Even to the tender blade?
There might have come the full corn in the ear,
Sighing before the slow soft winds of night,
Full harvest for a splendid garnering.

* * * * *

Why should you be but one more broken dream,
A melancholy memory till the far
Endings of the earth and faltering fall of life?

TENDEBAMQUE MANUS

I SAW you stand beside me in that hour
The infinite vision of the passing pain,
Now weary eyes were closed,
Sped arrowed fancy forth with all the power
Of the bent bow whereon the breaking strain
Had been at last imposed.

Yet in your glance vainly I looked for shame
To have mocked with measured love measureless need
Or something deeper sprung
From the soul's vast imaginative flame
Through doubt's old darkness where the great pale weed
Of obscurant wisdom clung.

Endurance, ardour, faith, pursuit, nor prayer
Availed; Love with hope's flying fire
Lured to the marsh of doom,
Embittered with the waters of despair.
My spirit, baffled of the great desire,
Fled to the lonely gloom.

MEDITATION

I SAW the stars against the summer night
Still trembling as they trembled when the light
First fell upon them from the further world.

I could not bend my proud humanity
To kneel before the cold immensity,
I, who had youth and love, I, who could know—
They—flotsam on the ethereal ebb and flow,
Dead things unmoved by immaterial fire
Of hope and anguish and divine desire.

They were not more omnipotent than I,
They could not see and dream and change and die.

I could not bow before infinity,
The silent grandeur could not conquer me.

CECIL HARWOOD
(BALLIOL)

FEBRUARY—A BRIGHT MORNING

THE scent of the sun is in the air around us,
Like the glimpse of a distant herald of victory,
Whose laurelled brows proclaim the fear that bound us
Is broken by our strong artillery.
There is more power in the echoing feet
Of passers in the newly-shining street.

Beyond the houses from the high trees are calling
Birds, and a whistling boy with shriller note
Polishes a window with the water falling
Sharply upon the slab. His well-worn coat
Is open now. An interested girl
At twenty smiles and smoothes a yellow curl.

Dreams that were dying flash to full defiance
Of the torpid cold content with that may be;
And the hearts of men renew the old alliance
With sun and windy sky and rising sea.
Who said despair shall perish with his despair,
And leaves shall bud, and resurgent youth shall dare.

Ere night perhaps the clouds will slow and thicken.
It is far to spring, it is very far to spring,
And flowers will die in frost, and hope will sicken,
And many the days that serve the desperate king.
But not uncertainly, joyous and brave,
We shall meet at length around the old time's grave.

MARRIED

A COOL white windy day. Grass and low hills.
A dog? A noisy scaramouch. Alone!
We have given too much in laughter and the thrills
Of slight discovery. We have not known
What this day promises, the uncurtained view
Of perfect imperfection, God in growth.
They lied who called Love cretin, and we knew
Not that they lied; we had forgot the oath.
Pause and repeat: Neither by day nor night,
At setting or uprising, shall we praise
Our store of broken beauty. Travel light
As beggars in the track of the new days.
Life is a captive fairy, bidding gold,
Jewels, strong incantations, to be free.
Refused, he offers youth that grows not old,
Immortal love. Refuse! And we shall see
The leprechaun Prometheus, heavens bend,
Earth shudder. Take! And turn the world to flame.
Lo, the hearts' pilgrimage has holy end,
And we have found—what has not yet a name.

PREMONITIONS

THERE is a terror in the sky,
A cloud before the moon.
When I wonder winds reply,
"Soon, very soon."

My crumpled, hot and narrow bed
No breathing space affords,
As there were boards above my head
And earth above the boards.

There is a moaning from the sky,
And hidden the pale moon.
When I wonder winds reply,
"Soon, very soon."

MEDITATION ON THE BERKSHIRE DOWNS

DUSK. Long, low downs. A shepherd. Drowsy sheep.
Stone-curlews near the dewpond's purple bowl
That brims with slow, sad stars and silver sleep;
Lampless the way, yet luminous the soul.

THE ANSWER

THE vision'd mystic, kneeling in despair,
Craving eternal wisdom, sought to pray.
When from afar he heard an angel say:
Thy spirit dwells with God—*thou* art the prayer.

THE SEER

YOU walk by lakes where magic moonlight dips
Its silver in the mirror of the skies. . . .
What do you tell me with your silent lips?
What is the meaning in your wond'ring eyes?

A. L. HUXLEY
(BALLIOL)

MOLE

TUNNELLED in solid blackness creeps,
The old mole-soul and wakes or sleeps,
He knows not which, but tunnels on
Through ages of oblivion,
Until at last the long constraint
Of each-hand wall is lost, and faint
Comes daylight creeping from afar;
And mole-work grows crepuscular.
Tunnel meets air and bursts; mole sees
Men hugely walking . . . or are they trees? . . .
And far horizons smoking blue
And wandering clouds for ever new;
Green hills, like lighted lamps aglow
Or quenching 'neath the cloud-shadow.
Quenching and blazing turn by turn
Spring's great green signals fitfully burn
Mole travels on, but finds the steering
A harder task of pioneering
Than when he thridded through the strait,
Blind catacombs that ancient fate
Had carved for him. Stupid and dumb
And blind and touchless he had come
A way without a turn; but here
Under the sky the passenger
Chooses his own best way, and mole
Distracted wanders; yet his hole
Regrets not much wherein he crept
But runs, a joyous nympholept,
This way and that, by all made mad.

River nymph and Oread,
Ocean's daughters and Lorelei
Combing the silken mystery,
The glaucous gold of her rivery tresses. . . .
Each haunts the traveller, each possesses
The drunken wavering soul awhile,
Then with a phantom's cock-crow smile
Mocks craving with sheer vanishment.
Mole-eyes grow hawk's; knowledge is lent
In grudging driblets that pay high
Unconscionable usury
To unrelenting life. Mole learns
To travel more secure; the turns
Of his long way less puzzling seem
And all those magic forms that gleam
In airy invitation cheat
Less often than they did of old.
The earth slopes upward, fold on fold
Of quiet hills that meet the gold
Serenity of western skies.
Over the world's edge with clear eyes
Our mole transcendent sees his way
Tunnelled in light. He must obey
Necessity again and thrid
Close catacombs as erst he did,
Fate's tunnellings himself must bore
Thorough the sunset's inmost core.
The guiding walls to each-hand shine
Luminous and crystalline;
And mole shall tunnel on and on
Till night let fall oblivion.

THE PICTURE SHOP

THE flow of the crowd is clotted here,
A frictional point in the street's sleek conduit:
In the stream is an island; motionless faces peer
In at the window of one of those shops,
At which, though a shamed individual shunned it,
A crowd of him gladly stops.

Pictures of scarce-veiled opulence,
A Dian slimness, a lolling pose:
A welter of basest beastliest sense;
Or is it here that the dumb crowd knows
God's beauteous immanence?

THE WHEEL

WEARY of its own turning,
Distressed with its own busy restlessness,
Yearning to draw the circumferent pain—
The rim that is dizzy with speed—
To the motionless centre, there to rest,
The Wheel must strain, through agony
On agony contracting, returning
Into the core of steel.
And at last the Wheel has rest, is still,
Shrunk to an adamant core,
Fulfilling its will in fixity.
But the yearning atoms, as they grind
Closer and closer, more and more
Fiercely together, beget
A flaming fire upward leaping,
Billowing out in a burning,
Passionate, fierce desire to find
The infinite calm of the Mother's breast.
And there the flame is a Christ-child sleeping,
Bright, tenderly radiant;
All bitterness lost in the infinite
Peace of the Mother's bosom.
But death comes creeping in a tide
Of slow oblivion, till the flame in fear
Wakes from the sleep of its quiet brightness
And burns with a darkening passion and pain,
Lest, all forgetting in quiet, it perish.

And as it burns and anguishes it quickens,
Begetting once again the Wheel that yearns—
Sick with its speed—for the terrible stillness
Of the adamant core and the steel-hard chain.
And so once more
Shall the wheel revolve, till its anguish cease
In the iron anguish of fixity;
Till once again flame billows out to infinity,
Sinking to a sleep of brightness
In that vast oblivious peace.

FOR THOSE GONE FROM BY THE SEA

THE Sea, the noontide, the receding song
Of waves, withdrawing from the radiant shore,
The bay, the harbour, where the old boats throng,
Shall drowse their eyelids with noon-dreams, no more.

The Sea, the moonlight, the majestic crash
Of crystal billows on the jewelled beach,
No more shall tell them of those Isles that flash
And fade for ever from adventure's reach.

North-wind's delirium, thunder's rolling rage,
All the demented voices of the deep,
Calling, lamenting them from age to age,
Shall stir no eyelid of the sleep they sleep.

A call they heard that came from overseas,
And they, with shouts that made the tall cliffs shake,
And songs that faded on the faint sea-breeze,
Vanished, one evening, in the red sun's wake.

And now they slumber on thy boundless breast,
O pale Pacific, whom no ambient light
Chaineth and straineth to her will's unrest,
Whom no wind troubles in thy timeless night.

Thou art their harbour and their open sea. . . .
And no dim crying from that distant shore
Shall end their roamings or their rest in thee,
Their Ocean-sepulchre for evermore.

SONNET

I LOVE the languor of late summer days,
When dream-compelling perfumes richly steep
The drowsèd winds, and green mirages sleep
In shimmering folds of opalescent haze;

And motionless, pale kine forget to graze
In the blue gloom of branches, drooping deep
With wealth of emerald leaves the old trees weep
For dateless woes, reviewed beneath noon's gaze.

But when their wafted sorrowings are hushed,
And they have yielded to the envied boon
Of mingling in the world's white rapture brief,

My life, in its too human bondage crushed,
Longs to invade the dolorous trees, and swoon
In sylvan trance of unremembered grief.

PAN

MUSES round the sacred spring
Dance not always, neither sing.
When they seek their white repose
Helicon its scandals knows.
Once the conversation ran
On the parentage of Pan.
"Why," said one, "you must agree
Pan's the son of Dryope.
Some affirm the godlike goat—
But you know the story to 't."
Then a second, "Did not Zeus
Phoebe's buxom maid seduce?"
"Both are out," affirmed another;
"Chaste Penelope's his mother;
Oh, Odysseus, poor dear man,
Little thinks of goatish Pan
That, if his face few loves allures,
'Tis the fault of all those wooers."

SONG

IF Ocean were but filled with wine,
Then were it my desire
From out his caverns into mine
To drain that crimson fire.
Wherefore 'tis well, though not divine,
That Ocean is not filled with wine.

THE GIRL

IN the deep humour of maturing hours,
When trees embosomed with their cloud of leaves
Speak summer to the winds, and fewest showers
Subdue the light of newly-gathered sheaves,
A girl lamented singly on a wold
For that her joy had waned and life was cold.

"That he should fly, 'tis nothing, but that love
Once seen should turn to nothingness and kill
The heart that nursed it as a treasure trove,
Oh, this is the supremacy of ill
That reigns where'er we glance, although its face
Be masked in verdure and delicious grace.

"I have had knowledge; what avails it now?
I have had music, but the fount is dry;
Romance has wreathed the laurel for my brow
And left me gazing on an empty sky,
Pale with the disappearance of a god;
My heart is what it is—a dusty clod."

So moaned she in disjointed utterance,
Scarce conscious of the folly of her pain,
For she was one trained in the crooked dance
Of intellectual subtlety and sane
Philosophy had yielded comfort one,
To ponder on the evil that was done.

When of a sudden came a gentle wind,
Chafing the airy damask of her cheek.
" It was not he," she cried, " but I that sinned;
The joy I sought, it was not there to seek.
The world's a meeting place of storm and ease,
And love is but a mystical disease.

" We live to laugh; laughter's the sum of things.
Take thou my kisses, wind, for now I see
That utter human disappointment springs
From a desire of Christian charity.
Out, out, fond kindness, I will be as earth—
Pagan, abandoned unto solar mirth."

Her eyes leapt up, her hair broke forth, her feet
Tiptoed the vivid grasses; angular
Her hand went to her brow; a dazzling fleet
Of birds was driving leisurely afar.
Was it for her this vision? Could it be
A sweet reward for her late blasphemy?

Ere she could reach unto the end of thought
A voice was in the blue, " Thou art approved,
Daughter of satisfaction. It is nought
The sorrow that thou bredst from thy beloved.
I am the radiance of the early day,
Warm thou thy body in the word I say.

" Madonna Cytherea is my name;
Be that enough." 'Twas gone, the sunny birds,
Sparrows and wrens were chirruping; aflame
She wandered on a flood of eager words—
" A dream? She spoke, her eyes, her accent mild
Are known to me, long known; and yet no child!

"I need no lover for I have seen Love.
My house is everywhere in this gay world;
The dearest exultation is to rove
A beam from some awakening planet hurled.
Yes, 'tis a beam, an ecstasy I am:
To learn the truth upon this wold I came.

"Amiable adoration of the skies,
On me, as on a thousand, hast thou shined,
That I should wash me in thy limpid eyes,
And gladsome be that I was one time blind.
Silence be now my theme, the joyousness
Of meditation on my eyelids press."

So saying, she descended from the wold,
A rapture breathing wheresoe'er she passed,
And meeting him whose heart had struck hers cold
A thankful look upon his forehead cast.
He bowed, and she went on, all jubilant
At the achievement of her life's romaunt.

N. M. MITCHISON
(*HOME-STUDENT*)

PAX ROMANA

TALL in your sunlit acres,
Quiet among your trees,
Or cool and calm in your garden
When summer scatters the bees,

In your high white-walled parlours
There breathes no echo of song,
But dim through the folded curtains
The day, drifting along.

Ploughing, sowing, and reaping,
And over the fertile ground,
From harvest on into harvest,
The seasons following round.

You will die unremembered,
But your land will not die,
And still shall be red wheat stretching
Between a sky and a sky.

OCTOBER

I HAVE proved your strength as naught, your faith as dust about
the door
Blown by expediency now here, now there,
And resting never; but from fear
Of some discomfort you cast into night
The Truth that makes the lives of men—and more—
Than this, you set your eyes away from light,
And fixed them in the little things that lay
About your feet, and are in God's eyes as the salt sea spray.

And still I love you—strangely, stubbornly—it will not die
This hunger for the sight and touch of you,
For all those wizard ways you knew
To still the heart ache that would never sleep
Quite quietly for what might lie
Hidden behind the Future—Strangely deep
The stillness of the ecstacy you brought
With those dear lips—a quiet more profound than sleep or death
or thought.

FRAGMENT FROM "THE WANDERER"

THE sea darkens. The waves rave and rush.
The wind rises. The last birds haste.
One star quakes above; the flush
Of yellow dies down behind the waste.

I look on the deepening sky,
The chill star, the forlorn sea breaking.
For what does my spirit cry?
For what is my heart so aching?

Is it home? But I have no home.
Is it tears? But I no more weep.
Is it love? Love went by dumb.
Is it sleep? But I would not sleep.

So alone, O soul, upon earth.
So alone twixt the sky and the deep:
No love and no lover worth
The bondage of tears and of sleep.

Must I fare, then, in fear and in fever
On a journey become thrice far,
Whose sun has gone down for ever?
Whose night brings no guiding star?

The wind roars and an ashen beam
Waving up shrinks away in haste.
The waves crash. The star's trickling beam
Travels the warring waste.

I look up : in the windy height
The star's orb serene and afar
Shakes overbrimmed with her light.
Beauty, be Thou my star!

FOUNTAIN SONG FROM "THE PRINCE OF ORMUZ"

MY rose before ever the three tears were shed
I wished lie in its bosom has fallen apart,
Off their snapped golden hair all my pure pearls have sped
Before their mid ruby could burn on my heart.
To-day is as yesterday: as to-day so to-morrow,
But fallen my rose, pearls, tears
Fallen in sorrow;
Or ever I woke it was sunset to-day,
As fast flows the fountain as fast flows away,
As fast fall away
My pearls and my tears, my rose and my sorrow.

LEONORE

DARK, calm-eyed Leonore loved
Rich roses deep and red.
Her still hand held one carmine
Beside her dusky head.

She had taken it from the bowl
Mellow white traced with blue,
Set on the tablet's lustrous
Level between us two.

As twilight fell her darkling look
Into my soul she bent.
Deeper her great eyes' languor was
Than the hushed roses' scent.

With June's moon Leonore stole out
Into the warm still mist.
Nought but the lonely fog floats in
To renew the long tryst.

Two crimson petals fall and then a hush,
And lo! two fall again.
How slow and red the petals drip!—
Symbols of love and pain.

"THE SOIL HATH SMUTCH'D IT"

REMORSEFUL, my Beloved, you!
And am not I remorseful too?
But O, it has been said,
It has been said—
The bitter thought has come to bitter birth,
And nothing worth
Is our regret.
We shall forget,
But O, it has been said,
It has been said—
Better our love were dead!

EPITAPH

ON A CHILD BORN BLIND,
Sunday, May 1st, 1912.

TREAD lightly by,
For here doth lie
In very peace our little Mary:
Sunday's child shall see a fairy.

THE TOWN

THE monster Town sprawls underneath the night
His jagged back of touzled alley-ways,
With here and there an eye of shuttered light,
Half-blind, peering athwart the waste of dark.

For night is the Beast's rest; when day is done
His panting breath grows hushed, and his huge limbs
Loosen relaxed, until another sun
Kindles the fever of another day.

Couched in uneasy sleep he lies, and hears
In spite of sleep, through troubled dreams, the cries
Of raging souls in vain, and stifled tears
Of beaten souls that whimper into sleep.

And still the mount of vision stands and calls
Leaning to rescue, till the sleeping Beast,
With a heave of streets and squares and prisoning walls,
Stirs, blindly groping towards the beckoning hand.

"LE DORMEUR DU VAL"

(Arthur Rimbaud)

THROUGH the green vale the crazy streamlets run,
Trailing their silver ribbons, and in pride
The light leaps down over the mountain-side:
A tiny hollow, shimmering in the sun.

A trooper—young, mouth open and bared head,
Slumbers; the blue cress bathes him where he lies
Flung in the grass, and dreams beneath the skies,
Drenched with the sunlight, pale on his green bed.
He lies, his feet among the corn-flags deep,
And smiles in dreams like a sick child asleep. . . .
Cradle him warm, O Earth! he is so cold.
Now in his nostrils every scent has died,
Still—still—upon his breast the white hands fold,
And two red bleeding holes gape in his side.

"LE MAL"

(Arthur Rimbaud)

BLOOD-RED the shrapnel spits, and leaping higher
Whistles day-long across the blue serene:
Hounded before their King—scarlet and green,
The massed battalions crumble under fire.

And the old ghastly madness fills the grave—
A hundred thousand men, one smoking heap. . . .
O pitiful dead! On the green fields you sleep,
Earth's loveliness, that bore you once so brave.

And God, who laughs amid the cloth of gold
And gleaming chalices, where incense steals,
Hearing in sleep low anthems softly rolled,
Wakes when a mother, huddled in her grief
Under her old black bonnet weeps, and kneels,
Offering her mite wrapped in a handkerchief.

LA COURTISANE

I TIP-TOED past your window as you slept,
A young pale moonbeam lighted on your bed,
A ray of silver on your shadowed head.
I think it was my heart's blood that I wept.

Veiled, dreaming eyes, dark lashes, curved and long,
Lithe, supple limbs, the languor of the South,
Faint, haunting shadows lurking round your mouth,
Red lips, which Love had made for wine and song.

And then, because I loved you passing well,
I could not bear to think the hands of Death
Should one day strangle that slow-rising breath.
I took my knife from out its blood-stained sheath—
And so we passed, each to our separate hell.

THE IN-COMING TIDE

SOMEWHERE are dim green silences, and peace,
And cloud-fleets slowly marshalled o'er the blue,
And trails of liquid bird-notes, clear and true,
With whir of glancing wings that find release.

Where dawn-flushed roses scattered fragrance shed
On swaying hare-bells' sheltered woodland dream,
And hush of twilight shrouds the darkening stream
As Night draws near, with silver-sandalled tread.

Oh! ship of dreams, borne in on hastening tide,
Whose restless waves are sunless now, and cold,
My heart is dumb, and suddenly grown old
With lonely longing for the men who died.

COR POETÆ

HE brought you gold.
He brought you lilies and cool marble.
Fallen in wondrous shapes.
All the music of life and summer laugh'd in him.
I had but dreams.

These he brought you,
These and his lips and longing eyes.
Yet you turned to me—
I who am nothing and love you—and chose, saying
"Give me your dreams."

But I could not.
How could I? I stood there mutely.
And with proud tears
You turned, and kissed him, and left me. . . . "Still,"
said I,
"I have my dreams."

O my misery,
Numb, choking, shaken with dry sobbing!
Here indeed is Death. . . .
O eternal and beautiful cruelty, dreadfully have you
undone me.
You have taken my dreams.

TO A LADY

THE Rain is falling : stars seem half put out,
And Gloom, grey-cloaked, creeps down the shuddering street,
Where the black pools and gutters meet and shout
And spit out mud beneath the pouring sleet.
The stripped poor world cried out as winter's thongs
Beat on her bare-back, lash and sickening sting—
And I forgot the sound of summer songs,
Lisp of spring leaves and laughing flowers of spring—
Till lo! I looked and saw within your eyes
The quickened roses in the blowing lane
And whitening crops that smiled at summer skies,
And the blood poppy and the world's done pain.
Ah no! the winter's song is not despair,
Solange, for on your lip is hope and in your hair.

SHERARD VINES
(NEW COLLEGE.)

SONG OF THE ELM

FIRS they brood on the mountain steps
Up to the edge of the snow
And squirrel and jay by the larches play
In the spate-marked cleave below.
Plane tree skirts the walks of the town
And tamarisk skirts the sea,
But a rolling elm on a rolling down
Is the mark of my country.

Oak went sailing forth to war
At the feet of admirals good,
Wicked and crook'd and gnarled and hook'd,
Crouching in Wistman's wood.
Ash of the rowan the good wife knows
Keeps roving ghosts from her door:
But wind's in the elm with the nesting crows
Voiced like a wave on the shore.

When the smoke has died from the stacks of hell,
Where the damned do honest toil,
When the Wafer is dust, and as all men must
Its priest lies under the soil;
When the moon is black, and the sun is old,
And drowned men swarm up the sea,
And the Lord climbs down from his chair of gold,
He'll climb by an old elm tree.

SUMMER NEAR TOWER BRIDGE

SOME acrid children of the town,
Whose little bodies peep between
Rents in their garments, cry obscene
Hail to each other, patter down,
Barefoot, the sun warmed paves, to see
Those the more venturous who strip
On some low barge behind a ship,
And yellow Thames looks cool and free:
They stand white-skinn'd, but thin of thigh,
Crop-headed; each one waits the other
To take the splash and abrupt smother,
Each boastful in his nudity.
The first dives and the others scream,
The others, one by one, and watch
Some wallowing lighters in a batch,
The tug foam-thrashing up the stream.
Tower green grass is bright with sun,
The speech of wheels is deep and wide,
While some chime on Surrey side
Tells how the city hours run.

EPIPHANY

AN hour of May for me
Is true Epiphany,
When the birds sing to us
"Creator Spiritus,"
And in each little nest
The Lord is manifest;
When thorn along the down
Is white with holy crown,
When plover scream and swerve,
Who their master serve
And all the brilliant wood
Is breathing God,
Now, no man may not see
True Epiphany.

MEDITATION

(From an Eastern Sage)

MOVED out of many things,
On wearied wings
Of unavailing sense,
I, seeking, found a way—
A purpose to allay
The failure of that sweet sufficience,
That as a dreamy cloud
Would still the wingèd voice
Which, by no evil choice,
Hath purpose to be loud.

I sought a way of power:
In every crowded hour
I learn'd!
Nor ever spurn'd
The land of ever-opening light,
The star of knowledge in the realm of night.
So, marvell'd I to know
What was of long ago,
And how my heart shall take,
And how re-make
The gleams that come and go.

So, in my scholar gown
(*Alive* now grown!)
I wearied not of all-the-earth's fair crown
That was my own.

I sought no more the feast:
I, now, more than a beast,
Cared little for the chase, the victory
O'er other beasts that I
No more could hate
Nor care to emulate!

Yet, as on earthly wing
I sought a higher thing,
Was caught
In the realms of thought,
So, seeking, must I find
(Or fall, for ever blind),
That Light
Amid the night:
That Power that did inflame
This universal frame! . . .
The gleams that come and go
That Power do know—
For I have caught
A radiance of their thought;
And, as I left behind
A body starved and blind,
So will I starve the brain
If but the *soul* attain
To love
Which is above:
And in love's longing find
The body, soul, and mind!

LOUGH CORRIB

A STILLNESS is on the bog,
The wide dim lake,
And the castle on the hill,
Where the sun goes setting down,
Tingeing with amber-red
The long bog-grass and purple heather.
Far off an owl cries out,
And a distant dog;
Man and his beast go home
To the long white village beyond.

Twilight comes
And the restless spirit of the past
Sighing over the lake,
Sighing weary in the stillness of the dusk,
Sad as the soft warm air,
The murmur of the grass,
And the gentle scent of the hills,
When the sun goes setting down.
Sad torn spirit of this land,
Sighing in the pale evening
For the sorrow that has been,
And the sorrow that is to come.

The night draws in,
The landscape fades,
And a fresh strong wind blows over the lake.

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